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Changing modes of intervention of the French intellectual
from the Dreyfus affair to today;
Sartre, Lévy, Hessel

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PhD thesis

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Declaration:

I, Marine Orain, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.
Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this
has been indicated in the thesis.

Signature:

Abstract:

Jean-Paul Sartre embodied the initial model of the total *intellectuel engagé* by mastering different genres and modes of intervention. At the end of his career, he engaged in the process of shifting from literature to audio-visual methods. He believed in the power of television, radio and cinema. Yet, in the 1980s, the enlargement of the public space brought by new media, and the death of some great names of the intellectual community, caused the marginalization of French *intellectuels engagés*.

This thesis argues that the evolution of form of the intellectuals' work testifies to the democratization of *engagement*: digital literacy works in favour of the intellectual's accessibility and independence, and therefore in favour of the much coveted "universalism".

Some French intellectuals adapted to new media to convey their messages, to make themselves marketable, and for their own survival. The example of Bernard-Henri Lévy, commonly and often pejoratively described as "the media intellectual", will be used to illustrate the politicization, globalization and diversification of the French intellectual.

Moreover, this thesis demonstrates that the explosion of new media did not signal the death of the intellectual's textual intervention. Quite the opposite: the Internet allowed a return to the written word. The case study of Stéphane Hessel and his bestselling pamphlet *Indignez-vous!* proves that literature can still generate change in today's hyper-connected society.

Up-to-date data was collected for this thesis through primary and secondary sources, as well as interviews. I interviewed Bernard-Henri Lévy in March 2014 on his public status, his use of the media and interventions in Libya and Ukraine. I interviewed Stéphane Hessel's publishers, Sylvie Crossman and Jean-Pierre Barou, from Indigène Editions, in September 2014. Jean-Pierre Barou worked with Sartre, Beauvoir and Foucault through *La Cause du Peuple* (he was the editor of this newspaper, and later took part in the creation of *Libération*). I interviewed Edgar Morin at the CNRS in July 2015 on the relationship between intellectuals, media and power, the use of Twitter at the age of 94, the connotations behind the notion of *engagement* and the decline of petitions.

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Introduction

This thesis proposes to examine the changing modes of intervention of the French intellectual from the Dreyfus affair until today. The case study of Jean-Paul Sartre will reveal the evolution of form of the intellectual's work before and after the Second World War. Two other case studies of intellectuals after Sartre, Bernard-Henri Lévy and Stéphane Hessel, will confirm this shift. The purpose here is to identify the different forms of *engagement* throughout the twentieth century and understand what is left of them in the twenty-first century for the masses. How did individual or collective actions in the public arena address public problems and influence decision-making? What were the conditions for the success of intellectuals' interventions in twentieth-century France? Are any of these conditions still relevant in the twenty-first century? My main thesis is that French intellectuals may have disappeared today but their exploration of different forms of *engagement* has led to a democratization of *engagement*, which I would define as the process by which *engagement* becomes more accessible to ordinary citizens. In a word, *engagement* has become civic. Intellectuals have lost their monopoly on *engagement* but have left key guiding concepts that we will identify further on in this introduction.

The notion of the French intellectual used throughout the thesis also needs to be defined from the beginning. In each country, the term "intellectual" implies different social backgrounds, roles, political parties and ideologies. It can command respect or contempt within society, and within the cultural elite itself. In *L'Opium des Intellectuels*, in 1955, Raymond Aron questioned the widely held belief that the quintessential intellectual resides in France:

La France passe pour le paradis des intellectuels et les intellectuels français passent pour révolutionnaires¹

If a so-called French exceptionalism is a myth, the status of French intellectual ensues from the recognition of specific credentials. Defining French intelligentsia has never been straight forward since its members themselves disagree on its definition. Raymond Aron revived the term "intelligentsia" in his book *L'Opium des intellectuels*,

¹ Raymond Aron, *L'Opium des Intellectuels*, (Paris : Calmann-Lévy, 1955), p.68.

in 1955, in which he explained that the term had been used for the first time in Russia in the 19th century to describe the aristocratic students who went to university and were steeped in western culture². According to Aron, the increasing meritocracy and democratization of education since the beginning of the 20th century have changed the way we define the intellectual.

Consequently, when analyzed, the intelligentsia is often organized into a hierarchy. For Aron, this hierarchy varies according to each country. He argues that in France, writers, scientists and artists form the core of the creative intelligentsia, followed by professors and critics, and finally journalists, whereas in the USA, a cultured writer stands further from the core of the intelligentsia than experts and technicians, whether they are economists or sociologists. Other observers have identified a hierarchy within the intelligentsia: the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu resorted to the terms “nobility” and “minor nobility”³, while Sirinelli used the terms “high” and “low intelligentsia”, to refer to the public notion (philosophers, writers etc.) and the wider social notion (professors, lawyers etc) of the Intellectual⁴.

Given that this thesis focuses on the modes of intervention of French intellectuals, we will be referring to public intellectuals only. This thesis takes the stance that the intellectuals are by definition public from the moment they depend on media to act as a spokesperson for society. The pleonasm in fashion “intellectuel médiatique” seems to ignore the fact that in the past some intellectuals, such as Jean Daniel or Claude Bourdet, were almost exclusively journalists.

This thesis deals with intellectuals who are included in the political arena. The Dreyfus Affair created a political division in France still visible today among the intellectual community and political life in general. Therefore, the main object of the study will be the *lettrés* (philosophers, writers, novelists) integrated in politics and diplomacy, as opposed to the wider social and less exposed notion of intellectuals (professors, doctors, lawyers) who are also less independent of institutionalised power. The choice to study intellectuals who are involved in politics goes against Julien Benda’s classic argument, in his book, *La trahison des clercs*, published in 1927, that intellectuals had betrayed their commitment to universals during the

² Raymond Aron, *L’Opium des intellectuels*, (Paris : Hachette, 1955), p.218.

³ Pierre Bourdieu, *La Noblesse d’état: grandes écoles et esprit de corps*, (Paris : Éditions de minuit, 1989).

⁴ Jean-François Sirinelli, Pascal Ory, *Les Intellectuels en France de l’affaire Dreyfus à nos jours*. (Paris: Armand Colin, 1986).

Dreyfus Affair. Seeking to restore the intellectual as a detached and rational observer of society, Benda preferred to use the word “clerc” which bore the enlightenment legacy. He was attached to the idea of eternal morality. However, he acknowledged the fact that for the past 200 years, famous writers, such as Voltaire, Diderot, Chateaubriand, Lamartine, and Victor Hugo had all intervened in the political arena⁵. His observation, despite being reproachful, remains a reality in modern France: most French intellectuals have been politically active, whether as activists with or without party affiliation, or as consultants, diplomats or politicians.

A further point concerns the decentralization of intellectual *engagement*. The French intellectual is by essence Parisian or lives in the Parisian microcosm. Still, some intellectuals and publishers may have attended the ENS or worked in Paris for a while but they deliberately moved back to the provinces. For example, the philosopher Michel Onfray, who was born in the Orne department and started his career publishing for Grasset and working for BHL’s review *La Règle du Jeu*, created his *Université Populaire* in Caen in 2002. He aims at “democratizing culture and offering free knowledge to as many as possible.”⁶ As for Stephane Hessel’s publisher, Sylvie Crossman, she attended the ENS but claims that she resigned for fear of conditioned thinking:

[...] je pense que quand je suis entrée à l’Ecole Normale Supérieure, j’ai été effarée et je me suis dit « Au fond, je vais vivre pour ne faire qu’entrer dans une empreinte mentale qui a été créée pour moi, avant moi et dont je ne vais faire qu’assurer le statu quo et la perpétuité. » Et ça, ça m’a effaré. Je me suis dit « On ne peut pas vivre une vie qui n’est que la répétition de la vie des autres et la répétition d’un schéma de pensée ». ⁷

She and her partner, Jean-Pierre Barou are proud that their publishing house, *Indigène Editions*, is based in Montpellier.

Moreover, most intellectuals – unlike Bourdieu whose father was a farm worker - come from privileged families, which generates a major contradiction between the universalism of their profession and the particularism of their class. Jean-Paul Sartre, in *Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels* in 1972, sums up the intellectual’s paralysis as follows:

⁵ Julien Benda, *La trahison des clercs*, (Paris : Grasset, 1975) (original edition published in 1927), p.204.

⁶ Université Populaire de Caen’s website: <http://upc.michelonfray.fr/a-propos/>

⁷ Sylvie Crossman, interviewed on 18th September 2014.

Jamais les intellectuels petits-bourgeois ne pourront être les intellectuels organiques des classes travailleuses.⁸

The Dreyfus Affair will be my starting point in the definition of the classic intellectual because this is the first time intellectuals stood as an entity – a divided entity, but one that brought them more power and credibility than any previous individual, isolated act. Zola stands out of this collectivity as the Republican model of social justice and the intellectual authority in politics. This event also marked for the first time in French history the opposition between national and universal responsibilities, as Zola chose to defend the universals of truth and morality and exposed government corruption.

Finally, the thesis will argue that there is no such thing as an independent intellectual – even with the advent of digital technology. The main institutions of public authority (university, political parties, media, etc) shape the intellectual's trajectory. The intellectual also needs other intellectuals, not necessarily to obtain and secure their recognition, but to create healthy opposition and debate in order for thought to progress.

To sum up, I will use the term French intellectual in this thesis to refer to a public philosopher, writer or novelist closely or remotely involved in politics, from a privileged background, educated in Paris, living in Paris – although the recent trend towards relocation in the provinces will be highlighted – and working within a network of public institutions. Therefore, I will not be using the term “public intellectual” as it would be a redundant phrase. If the Dreyfus Affair is my point of reference, I will also demonstrate that the figure of the classic intellectual incarnated by Zola has undergone transformations throughout the twentieth century. My definition of the classic intellectual concurs with the definition Edgar Morin gave me in an interview:

[...] je définis l'intellectuel comme quelqu'un qui, en plus de ce qu'il fait comme écrivain, comme poète etc..., prend position sur un problème commun à tous. Ce problème peut être philosophique ou peut être politique. Par exemple, Emile Zola est un romancier qui devient intellectuel quand il prend position dans l'Affaire Dreyfus.⁹

⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels*, (Paris : Gallimard, 1972), p.418.

⁹ Edgar Morin, interviewed by Marine Orain, 22 July 2015 at the Institut des Sciences de la Communication, CNRS, Paris.

I am aware that women intellectuals are underrepresented in my thesis, but my main focus is on intellectual interventions and media in the twentieth century and the reality was that male intellectuals enjoyed greater media coverage than women. In *Beauvoir à la croisée de l'histoire des femmes et des intellectuels* (in *Intellectuelles: du genre en histoire des intellectuels*, 2004), Sylvie Chaperon laments the fact that female intellectuals still do not receive the same attention from institutions, from the media and from historians as male intellectuals do. This inequality can be illustrated in literature by the supremacy of the Goncourt Prize, selling on average 400 000 copies per year, while the Femina Prize sells 97 000 copies. Moreover, the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu demonstrated that most intellectuals attended the Grandes Ecoles in Paris, especially the Ecole Normale Supérieure, and his study also underlined the low number of women among the laureates, and consequently among French intellectuals¹⁰. With more female students in higher education than male students since 1981¹¹, it is to be hoped that more and more female intellectuals will emerge and gain as much popular recognition as their male counterparts. The three intellectuals that I chose are men who attended the ENS and have been highly publicized. Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli's masculine definition of the intellectual also conveys the omnipresence of men in the French intelligentsia: '[...] un homme du culturel, créateur ou médiateur, mis en situation d'homme du politique, producteur ou consommateur d'idéologie.'¹² I could have dedicated one of my case studies to Simone de Beauvoir who also engaged in political causes and was one of the most preeminent existentialists, but since Sartre is at the chore of my thesis as the model for all subsequent intellectuals, I chose to study two other intellectuals whose careers continued in the twenty-first century in order to measure Sartre's legacy. Although none of my case studies exclusively deal with a woman intellectual, I do examine in Chapter Two the work of Germaine Tillon, the French sociologist and ethnographer who acted as a mediator between the French State and Algerian Muslims during the Algerian War. Further, I interviewed a woman intellectual, Sylvie Crossman, who was behind Stéphane Hessel's late success and who also defends her own causes.

¹⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *La Noblesse d'Etat*, (Paris : Editions de minuit, 1989), p.87.

¹¹ Fabienne Rosenwald, *Données sociales – La société française, Filles et garçons dans le système éducatif depuis vingt ans*, (Paris : INSEE, 2006), p.88.

¹² Pascal Ory, Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les Intellectuels en France. De l'affaire Dreyfus à nos jours*, (Paris : Armand Colin, 1986), p. 10.

My thesis provides new materials in the fields of philosophy, sociology, the publishing world and the use of mass media and the Internet by French intellectuals. I interviewed the writer Bernard-Henri Lévy – who is commonly nicknamed BHL when he is described as a political and media actor – to get his point of view on his image of “media master”. We discuss his field interventions in countries at war and his anti-anti-Americanism. He also gives me his opinion on Sartre and Hessel. Further, my interview of Hessel’s publishers, Sylvie Crossman and Jean-Pierre Barou, demonstrates how similar Sartre and Hessel’s *engagements* were. Crossman explains the reason for the success of Hessel’s 2010 pamphlet *Indignez-vous!* and describes its legacy and influence on *Los Indignados*, the anti-austerity movement in Spain which started in May 2011 and became the left-wing political party *Podemos* in March 2014. Barou, who worked with Sartre in the 1970s, explains how important Sartre’s concept of individual responsibility was for Hessel and deplores the end of intellectual *engagement* in France. Finally, I also interviewed the sociologist Edgar Morin who depicts his friend Hessel in a different light. He gives me a valuable testimony about Hessel and opposes him to Jean-Paul Sartre. Morin discusses the relationship between intellectuals, media and power, the use of Twitter at the age of ninety-four, the connotations behind the notion of *engagement* and the decline of petitions. Morin also stresses the importance of poetry for an intellectual, in the sense that the benefits from reading or writing poetry balance with the state of permanent dissatisfaction and indignation attached to the status of intellectual.

I have chosen to focus on form in my thesis as it has often been underestimated in the existing studies of the French intellectual’s work in favour of content and status. To what extent does form reflect the content of the intellectual’s work? For example, how does the Sartre who founded *Les Temps modernes* in 1945 differ from the Sartre who co-founded *Libération* in 1973? I position my argument vis-à-vis other critics who focused on intellectual interventions. I revisit the work of Pascal Ory, Jean-François Sirinelli, Régis Debray and Pascal Boniface, who all specialize in cultural and political history in the twentieth century. They are particularly relevant to this research since they focused more on the actual intervention of the intellectual and less on his or her status. In fact, at the end of his

book *Les Intellectuels en France de l’Affaire Dreyfus à nos jours*, Sirinelli called for new research on the intellectual’s “structures of sociability”: networks, clubs, reviews, petitions etc. Since the publication of his book in 1986, intellectuals have regularly resorted to other means of action as well, such as the Internet, television, cinema and field interventions in war zones. I intend to examine these new interventions, but also I will put forward the idea that Sirinelli’s term, “structures of sociability”, implied an elitist and closed circuit of interactions, from which some intellectuals have been progressively breaking away. New modes of action have favoured a new sociability closer to the masses and have created a more horizontal notion of “structure”. This would mean for example that the decline of salons and petitions not only signals the death of the obsolete “classic intellectual”, but also facilitates the advent of the new intellectual whose role is to decentralize, socially and geographically, *engagement*.

Jeremy Ahearne focused on French intellectuals’ “implication in the processes of public policy formation”¹³ in French culture and society. For example, he analyzed their role in defining and interpreting *laïcité*, or in designing national curriculums in education. He also encouraged other researchers to look into “different thematic areas of intervention”.¹⁴ My thesis explores other areas of intervention in France but also abroad, from preventive diplomacy to globalization. I did not restrict my thesis to their interventions in France, nor to one domain of intervention because I intend to demonstrate their internationalization and diversification.

Debray’s initial division of the modes of intervention of the intellectual – the university sphere between 1880 and 1930, the editorial sphere between 1930 and 1968, and the media sphere from 1968 onwards¹⁵ – has also been revisited by the academic and researcher in communication sciences, Louise Merzeau. Inside Debray’s media sphere, which contains the logosphere (oral transmission), the graphosphere (written transmission) and the videosphere (starting with the invention of color television), she added the “hypersphere” to refer to the Internet and its digital environment¹⁶. My thesis calls for a reassessment of these two concepts, Debray’s

¹³ Jeremy Ahearne, *Intellectuals, culture and public policy in France, Approaches from the Left*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), p.2.

¹⁴ Jeremy Ahearne, p.5.

¹⁵ Régis Debray, *Le Pouvoir intellectuel en France*, (Paris: Ramsay, 1979).

¹⁶ Louise Merzeau, ‘Ceci ne tuera pas cela’, *Les Cahiers de médiologie*, 6 (1998), 27-39.

1979 “media sphere” and, inside it, Merzeau’s 1998 “hypersphere”, in relation to today’s intellectual. The commonly understood notion of ‘media’ implying an interposed or intermediate ‘channel’ now seems anachronistic and rigid in the era of the “immediate”, as in “without intermediary”. Of course, the media sphere is still vital to the intellectual, but I want to point to this deinstitutionalized “immediate sphere” which now allows the intellectual to reach the masses without depending on a publisher, a presenter or a Webmaster. Using online social networking services, such as Twitter, or personal websites, the intellectual can intervene in real time, interact and debate with the masses and deliver a concise message. (Even traditional media institutions are resorting to this instantaneousness – with 24-hour news channels – and this incisiveness – with *bloc-notes* and *billets d’humeur*.) While immediacy and brevity are not without risk – in 1977, Deleuze already criticized the New Philosophers and their “nouveau type de pensée, la pensée-interview, la pensée-entretien, la pensée-minute”¹⁷ – my aim is to demonstrate that digital literacy works in favour of the intellectual’s accessibility and independence, and therefore in favour of the much coveted “universalism”.

By uniting the following chapters around the importance of form in the intellectuals’ intervention, my aim is to identify both the peaks and the absences of their interventions, and to measure their adaptability to new media. For example, Jean-Paul Sartre embodied the petitioner in France between the late 1940s and the early 1970s¹⁸, but it seems that the following generations of intellectuals partly abandoned group petitions for more individual commitments. Being invited on the radio programme *Radioscopie*, on air from 1968 to 1989 would give the intellectual the chance to get a portrait-interview and be “put on the spot”. Beyond the study of the successive forms of the intellectuals’ work, this thesis aims to evaluate to what extent the intellectuals adapted to each media to effectively convey their messages, to make themselves marketable, and at the end of the day, to survive. I propose that, by changing their modes of action, intellectuals modified their role within society. I also measure the role of literature as an agent of social change in today’s society. In 1972, Jean-Paul Sartre claimed that a written intervention was as good as another:

¹⁷ Gilles Deleuze, ‘À propos des nouveaux philosophes et d’un problème plus général’, *Deux régimes de fous. Textes et entretiens 1975-1995*, (Paris : Editions de Minuit, 2003) pp.127-34.

¹⁸ Jean-François Sirinelli, *Intellectuels et passions françaises, Manifestes et pétitions au vingtième siècle*, (Paris : Fayard, 1990), p.10.

‘Il importe peu que l’oeuvre se présente sous une forme ou sous une autre. [...] Cela dépend de l’entreprise particulière, il n’y a pas de forme prioritaire.’¹⁹ And yet, today, as a sign of the times, Gallimard only prints 3000 copies of *Les Temps Modernes*, the review that he created in 1945 with the following leitmotiv: ‘L’engagement ne doit, en aucun cas, faire oublier la littérature.’ Sartre’s vision of *littérature engagée* was not occasional but structural, an integral part of his identity as a writer. In *Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels*, in 1972, he defends the writer’s status as intellectual. For him, a writer is an intellectual in essence, not by accident. He believes writing must be both particularistic – permeated with the writer’s personal experience – and universal – through the common language and values shared with the reader²⁰. However, in the post-Sartre era, literature seems to be competing with the intellectual’s range of interventions. Therefore, has literature stopped being the supreme component of the intellectual’s work? *Littérature engagée* and literature that triggers the *engagement* of the masses, I argue, are two different things and may not attract the same number of readers in the era of the democratization of *engagement*, communication and information access. The case studies of intellectuals who intervened in the second half of the 20th century will allow us to compare these two types of literature.

In addition to the topic of forms of intervention, my thesis also addresses several crosscutting themes in order to deconstruct preconceived ideas about the French intellectual. First of all, *engagement* is not self-evident. Our perception of *engagement* today may be biased by our memory of Sartre’s *engagement* or by what it meant to be *engagé* in the *Résistance*. For example, Morin sees in the term of *engagement* a military, or even disciplinary, connotation and deplors its overuse. As he remarks, nobody called Voltaire and Montaigne *engagés*, they were genuinely fighting for a cause. In their respective interviews, both Morin and Lévy told me that the phrase “*intellectuel engagé*” was a pleonasm. The rise in the number of academics – and therefore the growth of academic specializations – combined with the complexity of international relations has made intellectuals more cautious about their public statements. I intend to demonstrate that *engagement* is not a black and white decision anymore.

¹⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels*, (Paris : Gallimard, 1972), p.452.

²⁰ Sartre, *Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels*, p.454.

I also look at the efficiency of the intellectual's *engagement*. The aim is to separate mythification – and self-mythification at times – from the actual result and impact on society. For example, Hessel's pamphlet *Indignez-vous!* generated very little reaction among French youth – although it was directly addressed to their generation and sold 2.5 million copies in France – but it is thought to have empowered the Spanish anti-austerity movement, Los Indignados. Therefore, it is important to reflect on the measurability of *engagement* and the criteria for intellectual performance: the size of the readership, the number of countries and languages in which the intellectual intervenes or is translated, the intellectual's interlocutors in politics etc.

The French intellectual is defined as a counterweight to politics, often symbolized in France by the opposition between the two institutions ENS and ENA. In reality, several intellectual figures took part in politics: Malraux as Minister of Cultural Affairs, BHL as a consultant to the President or Hessel as a diplomat. They could be designated as “intellectuels de gouvernement”, a term used by Gérard Noiriel in *Les fils maudits de la République*²¹ to describe intellectuals who advise and direct opinions in the government. Although the intellectuals' intervention in politics accentuates their particularism of class, I intend to show that it can also serve universalism.

I also deal with the paradoxical relationship between the twenty-first century French intellectual and the media. Some intellectuals are sometimes criticized for their omnipresence in the media, but at the same time others are blamed for their silence on current affairs and for remaining in their ivory tower. Clearly, our society has not made up its mind about the role of today's intellectual. I noticed a certain shame among intellectuals who have a strong presence in the media, often followed by an attempt by these intellectuals to trivialize their use of the media. My purpose is to establish whether this feeling of guilt is induced by our media-exposed society and why. For example, when I interviewed Lévy, he downplayed his image of “media master” and denied that he relied on a “network” of connections in the media and in politics. The intellectuals' media exposure may seem suspicious as it might mean that they own part of the media industry, e.g. Lévy and Grasset Editions. Therefore,

²¹ Gérard Noiriel, *Les Fils maudits de la République : l'avenir des intellectuels en France*, (Paris : Fayard, 2005).

my hypothesis is that social networks remove this suspicion of centralized power as they offer a more democratized platform for both the masses and intellectuals.

Finally, I want to define the values of the twenty-first century French intellectual, as they may not be the same as those defended by their predecessors. Zola has been depicted as an advocate for antimilitarism or non-violence²², but Sartre, Lévy and Hessel have all justified the use of violence at some point in their careers. I will also look at their respective positions on religion and ideology. I suggest that certain credentials such as their degree of involvement in May 68 and their theoretical base may not find any echo in today's society and I call for the creation of new relevant credentials.

Critics and commentators have long proclaimed the death of French intellectuals. My thesis provides an update on the primary and secondary material that has been commenting on this phenomenon since Mai 1968. Between 1968 and the end of the twentieth century, these sources – sociologists, academics, historians or philosophers for the most part – explained that the decline of intellectuals resulted from the death of some great names of the intellectual community, but also from external factors such as the enlargement of the public space brought about by new media, the professionalization of journalism, the rise in graduate students and the development of consumer society. For example, for Alain Touraine who taught sociology at the University of Nanterre in 1968, the student movement had clearly outpaced intellectuals:

[...] il faut redire que cette intelligentsia n'a pas joué de rôle moteur dans le mouvement de mai. Elle a été en réalité éclairée par le feu plus qu'elle ne l'a allumé ou entretenu. Au total, les grands "intellectuels de gauche" n'ont joué qu'un rôle modeste, même à la Sorbonne, et le plus important d'entre eux, Jean-Paul Sartre a lui-même senti cette situation, se réduisant à n'être que l'interviewer discret de Cohn-Bendit pour *Le Nouvel Observateur* et ne faisant qu'une intervention publique à la Sorbonne.²³

²² Vittorio Frigerio, *Emile Zola au pays de l'anarchie*, (Grenoble : Ellug, 2006), p.17.

²³ Alain Touraine, *Le Mouvement de mai, ou le communisme utopique*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1968), p.56.

Writing four years after Sartre's death, Patrick Combes explained that the decline of the intellectual coincided with the decline of ideologies.²⁴ Bernard-Henri Lévy would describe the same consensus among the intelligentsia in 1988 with the hybrid figure of "Sartron", highlighting the convergence between the left and the right – Sartre and Aron had lobbied to help the Vietnamese boat people in 1979. In parallel, as highlighted by Jean-François Sirinelli in 1990, French intellectuals were faced with new opinion leaders invading TV shows, such as the comedian Coluche who even began his presidential campaign in 1980 before standing down under political pressure.²⁵ In his 1993 book, *Sartre, le dernier philosophe*, Alain Renaut also claimed that no philosopher would ever take over from Sartre because nobody would have the naivety of trying to articulate an all-encompassing theory to explain our ever-changing world.²⁶ At the end of the twentieth century, all these analyses implied that the French intelligentsia was subjected to external circumstances (the rise of the student movement during May 68, the decline of ideologies, the emergence of new opinion leaders on TV) that limited the scope of its influence.

In parallel, other critics highlighted unfavourable factors that were rather internal to the intelligentsia. Already in 1979 in *Le Pouvoir intellectuel en France*, Régis Debray warned of the concentration of powers by certain intellectuals who occupied a central position among mass media:

La position médiatique est le couronnement logique d'une carrière intellectuelle. C'est elle aujourd'hui qui maintient les principautés et fait les rois.²⁷

Debray described mass media as a dangerous shortcut that allowed the intellectual to reach the masses without requiring peer recognition. No need for a school of thought, problematics or a shared theoretical basis anymore. For Debray, these intellectuals favoured singularity over universalism and sensationalism over reason. In *Les Intellocrates* in 1981, Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman also denounced the omnipotent *cumulards* who mastered academia, publishing and mass media at the

²⁴ Patrick Combes, *La littérature et le mouvement de mai 68, Ecriture, mythes, critique, écrivains*, (Paris: Seghers, 1984), p.258.

²⁵ Jean-François Sirinelli, *Intellectuels et passions françaises, manifestes et pétitions au 20ème siècle*, (Paris: Fayard, 1990), p.334.

²⁶ Alain Renaut, *Sartre, Le dernier philosophe*, (Paris: Grasset, 1993), p.247.

²⁷ Régis Debray, *Le Pouvoir intellectuel en France*, (Paris: Ramsay, 1979), p.151.

same time. In 1997, seventy years after Benda's *La Trahison des clercs* and sixty-five years after Nizan's *Les Chiens de garde*, the journalist Serge Halimi denounced *Les Nouveaux Chiens de garde* who according to him didn't protect *bourgeois*' interests anymore, but those of the economic *décideurs*. The journalists Nicolas Beau and Olivier Toscer would paint a very similar portrait of Bernard-Henri Lévy in 2006 in *Une Imposture française*. Beau and Toscer blamed him for his financial relations and his friendship with French businessmen François Pinault and Jean-Luc Lagardère. They also accused him of exercising censorship and using his network in the media to defend his films. The content of his books has also often been mocked. Other journalists, Jade Lindgaard and Xavier de La Porte, describe in *Le nouveau B.A.BA du BHL* his writing style:

[...] les phrases de BHL rendues incompréhensibles par l'amoncellement des références, ou les assemblages de mots ne voulant rien dire. Un trait d'écriture qui n'est jamais relevé en France, alors qu'il en est un des ressorts constants depuis les années soixante-dix. A Paris, on appelle ça le "style BHL".²⁸

In the twenty-first century, it seems that only journalists have been commenting on Lévy's lack of substance, as if no one else wanted to be associated with his name. In Pierre Carles' documentary *Enfin pris?* in 2002, Pierre Bourdieu explains that Lévy has asked him several times for a television debate, but Bourdieu keeps turning down the offer as it would be giving Lévy too much credit.²⁹ Is Bernard-Henri Lévy the only French intellectual under attack? Pascal Boniface, the geopolitical scientist who directs and founded the Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques, successively wrote *Les Intellectuels faussaires* in 2011 and *Les Intellectuels intègres* in 2013. In the first book, he denounces the lies of those who, according to him, defend a cause only to improve their popularity and who mislead the masses with erroneous arguments. Among Boniface's list of *beaux parleurs* appear the names of the historian Alexandre Adler, the French political adviser Thérèse Delpech, the writers and journalists Caroline Fourest and Philippe Val, and Bernard-Henri Lévy. In the second book, he pays a tribute to intellectuals who he considers served or are serving the collective interest, such as Stéphane Hessel, Edgar Morin, Régis Debray, and Dominique Wolton. It is interesting to note that some of them do not

²⁸ Jade Lindgaard, Xavier de La Porte, *Le nouveau B.A.BA du BHL*, (Paris: La Découverte, 2011), p.235

consider themselves as intellectuals, either because they think of this word as insulting or lacking modesty. Boniface deliberately chose people who had had a long career because he believes intellectuals are built on their lifelong works and authentic experiences.³⁰

Therefore, when reading these secondary sources from May 1968 until today, it is clear that the decline of French intellectuals is ascribed firstly to external factors and then to internal ones that have deeply damaged the image of intelligentsia in the public mind. Even without the help of the above books, the image of the ridiculed intellectual, associated with imposture and pedantry, is now very much part of a general perception among French society. For example, the iconic French singer and songwriter Renaud released a song in 2002 titled *L'Entarté* in which he mocked Bernard-Henri Lévy, who was the target seven times of the Belgian pie thrower Noël Godin:

L'entarteur nous a bien vengé
De ce Jean-Paul Sartre dévalué
Qui vient nous pondre à la télé
Ses vieux discours bien éculés

Despite this overall loss of credibility, some important public figures like Stéphane Hessel have surprisingly revived the French intellectual in the twenty-first century, even if Hessel only saw himself as a diplomat and activist. He showed that media coverage and *engagement* were compatible if the intellectual demonstrated a certain authenticity. This thesis certainly distinguishes intellectuals who declare themselves *engagés* from those who generate *engagement* among the masses and intends to highlight the heritage and concepts that the latter have left us.

My thesis relies on three concepts identified by Jean-Paul Sartre that, I believe, reflect his own trajectory as an intellectual and influenced other intellectuals willing to generate *engagement*: the lack of reciprocity between the author and the masses, the *universel singulier*, and seriality.

Through his reflection on language and communication in *Critique de la Raison Dialectique* in 1960, Sartre established that the inequality – or in his words,

³⁰ Pascal Boniface, *Les Intellectuels intègres*, (Paris: Jean-Claude Gawsewitch, 2013), p.12

the lack of reciprocity – between the author and the reader was insurmountable. He described as reciprocity the following relation:

[...] quasi-objet et quasi-sujet l'un pour l'autre et l'un par l'autre simultanément.³¹

In 1943 in a long article titled “Un nouveau mystique”, Sartre had already denounced the hierarchy between the author and the reader that can be felt, according to him, in Georges Bataille’s book, *L’Expérience intérieure*. Sartre found Bataille’s tone in this book contemptuous and wrote that the communication Bataille was trying to establish with his reader was without reciprocity.³² Sartre himself would later confirm his disillusion with the relation between the author and the reader in his autobiography, *Les Mots*, in 1963. With hindsight, he told Simone de Beauvoir what his intention was when writing *Les Mots*:

J’ai voulu qu’il [*Les Mots*] soit plus littéraire que les autres parce que j’estimais que c’était en quelque sorte une manière de dire adieu à une certaine littérature et qu’il fallait à la fois la réaliser, l’expliquer, prendre congé d’elle. J’ai voulu être littéraire pour montrer l’erreur d’être littéraire.³³

His detachment from literature as a bourgeois institution manifested itself in his refusal to accept the Nobel Prize for literature in 1964. And yet the following year, Sartre showed in the conferences he gave in Japan - which would then be gathered in 1972 in *Plaidoyer pour les Intellectuels* – that even if he disapproved of institutionalised literature, he still valued the universalizing effect of literature.

To try and solve the problem of lack of reciprocity between the author and the masses, Sartre operated a shift that can be observed in his *Carnets de la drôle de guerre* in which he identifies with André Gide:

Je sens ses jours de guerre avec mes jours de guerre. Et tout d’un coup voilà que ma provision de jours est épuisée et Gide a encore quatre ans et demi de guerre à vivre. C’est atterrant.³⁴

³¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique de la Raison dialectique*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p.476.

³² Jean-Paul Sartre, “Un nouveau mystique”, in *Situations I* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), p.151-152.

³³ Jean-Paul Sartre, in Simone de Beauvoir, *La Cérémonie des adieux*, ‘Entretiens’, p.275.

³⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Carnets de la drôle de guerre, Septembre 1939 - Mars 1940*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1995, originally published in 1983), p.34.

Sartre reiterated his respect for Gide when he paid tribute to him in *Les Temps modernes* in 1951 after his death. He explained that Gide had saved contemporary literature from symbolism and that he had managed to find his own truth, as opposed to the absolute truths described by Symbolists³⁵. Even if Gide was very careful with his *engagement* and was very different from Sartre who would soon be known as the *pétitionnaire de service* during the Algerian War, Sartre believed that Gide had faced his historicity in his writing, and that this was the starting point of any author's *engagement*. Sartre saw in Gide's writing a concept he called *l'universel singulier*, the combination of the socio-historical context and the individual's subjective thinking. Sartre was always anxious to fill the gap between the author and the masses, and therefore he claimed that man (the author) could represent all men (the readers), in the sense that they were all conditioned by the same societal environment. Even Gustave Flaubert, as depicted in Sartre's *L'Idiot de la famille* published between 1971 and 1976, was a "singular universal".

The third concept that, I believe, had an impact on intellectuals and *engagement* is seriality. In 1960, in *Critique de la raison dialectique*, Sartre opposes the terms "group" – an entity actively unified by a common goal – and "series" – an ensemble of anonymous and interchangeable individuals alienated from one another but passively and superficially unified around a common interest. To illustrate his concept, Sartre describes strangers waiting for the bus, or people listening to the radio.³⁶ He presents seriality as a disengagement that should be overcome. When *Critique* was published, only 13% of French households owned a television set. This percentage increased five-fold between 1960 and 1970.³⁷ Mass media, as well as mass transportation and mass urbanisation, would definitely amplify seriality. It would divert the public's attention from common purposes to shared interests. I acknowledge the fact that seriality may have played a role in the decline of intellectuals' audience. However, in this thesis, I would like to challenge the idea that seriality is still a threat to *engagement* in the twenty-first century. With the boom of

³⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Gide vivant", *Les Temps modernes*, n°66, March 1951, published in *Situations IV*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p.87-89

³⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p.364.

³⁷ INSEE, 'La consommation des ménages en TIC depuis 45 ans', 1101, published 08/09/2006.

social networks worldwide, the online presence of NGOs, the rise of crowdfunding and the success and official recognition of online petitions, *engagement* can be lived anonymously and separately. This form of *engagement* completely bypasses intellectuals, even if some of them maintain an online presence and interact with the masses, as we will see in this thesis with the example of Edgar Morin.

These three concepts – the lack of reciprocity between the author and the reader, the universal singulier and seriality constitute the spine of my thesis and explain the following chapter plan. Chapter One is organized thematically and focuses on the forms of intellectual intervention between the Dreyfus affair and the Liberation, when intelligentsia mainly addresses its own elitist bubble. It defines the notion of the classic French intellectual at the beginning of the twentieth century. It stands as a reference point for the successive transformations of the intellectual throughout the century. The study of the Dreyfus Affair reveals the birth and persistence of two camps within the intelligentsia: the Dreyfusards, who defend the universal autonomy of their condition and intervention, and the Anti-Dreyfusards, who place the defence of the national interest first. Hence, French intelligentsia must not be observed as one homogeneous group. The confrontation between the two camps took the form of petitions, press articles, reviews, leagues and essays.

Chapter Two deals with the forms of intellectual intervention after the Liberation, when intellectuals used mass media to disseminate and explain their work and then to deliver an exhortation to *engagement*. Intellectuals produced more petitions and manifestos than in the previous or following years, but they were also criticized for some of their positions: support for the Soviet Union and its violence, encouragement to the use of violence by colonized Algerians against their colonizer etc. The act of writing, in the form of articles or books, was part of the reflexion process of the intellectual on Soviet communism. As the state censorship on the Algerian War intensified, certain intellectuals like Francis Jeanson radicalized their activism, while others like Albert Camus remained silent. Thus the Algerian War really challenged the notion of *engagement* among intellectuals. They also had to compete in the public sphere with the launch of new magazines in the 1950s and the democratization of television in the 1960s, therefore the efficiency and necessity of their *engagement* was about to be contested on an unprecedented scale. I also analyze the shift from their position of opinion leaders to that of followers during May

68. The Chapter is organized thematically, starting with classic forms of intervention such as essays, reviews, newspapers, petitions, and moving towards more radical forms such as politics and clandestine activity, before examining three audio-visual media: the radio, the television and the Internet.

I would say that Chapters One and Two reflect Sartre's trajectory in a way, from his elitist bubble before the Second World War to the dissemination and explanation of his work through mass media after 1945.

Finally, the second part of this thesis will consist of three case studies of intellectuals in the second half of the 20th century. The three chapters will echo and illustrate in more details the theoretical framework set up in the first part. I intend to demonstrate that not all French intellectuals disappeared in the 1980s and that the choice of their modes of action was crucial to the effectiveness of their *engagement*. I have chosen to examine the modes of action of Jean-Paul Sartre, Bernard-Henri Lévy and Stéphane Hessel.

I decided to devote Chapter Three to Jean-Paul Sartre since he embodied the total intellectual and was in many ways the heir of Emile Zola in his mission to combat injustice. He has proven to be the model for all subsequent intellectuals. Hence the renewed definition of the French intellectual by Jean-François Sirinelli and Pascal Ory: 'L'intellectuel ne se définit plus par ce qu'il est, une fonction, un statut, mais par ce qu'il fait, son intervention sur le terrain du politique.'³⁸ I intend to show how he rejuvenated the classic definition of the intellectual by mastering different genres. Moreover, he went beyond the role of sermonizer; the new intellectual was among the masses. My approach is thematic: I examine the convergence of literature, philosophy and politics in his work. I show how he tried to popularize his work through his plays. I follow his journey from his review *Les Temps modernes* to the newspaper he co-founded, *Libération*. I demonstrate that the interviews he gave in the press and on the radio changed forms and purposes throughout his career. Finally, I analyze his interventions for the television and the cinema and his activism during the second part of his career.

In Chapter Four, I will look particularly at Bernard-Henri Lévy who is commonly, and often pejoratively, described as the "media intellectual", even though one should acknowledge the redundancy of this designation. Lévy is a multifaceted

³⁸ Jean-François Sirinelli, Pascal Ory, *Les intellectuels en France*, p.9.

public figure and hard to categorize. He is originally a *philosopher* who brought *la Nouvelle Philosophie* to light in the late 1970s, but he also works as an historian, a novelist, a playwright, a filmmaker and a war reporter at times. I will explain what exactly discredits him, beyond his intensive use of the media, and how his case can help us understand what we value in other intellectuals. Even though Lévy claims that his conception of *engagement* is very close to that set by the initial model of *intellectuel engagé*, Sartre, I will argue that the writer cannot simply declare himself *engagé* in order to be recognized as such in the eyes of the masses.

Finally, I conclude this thesis with the case study of Stéphane Hessel in Chapter Five. Hessel is considered as being an intellectual, even though he preferred the term “diplomat”. He was a concentration camp survivor and a member of the French Resistance. He worked in French politics and as a UN ambassador. He took part in the writing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. Stéphane Hessel died in February 2013. No interviews of Hessel were conducted for this thesis but I interviewed his two editors, Sylvie Crossman and Jean-Pierre Barou. I chose to write a case study on Hessel because he was the source of inspiration for this thesis and represents a return to the more “traditional” form of the petition as a mode of intellectual intervention. Indeed, he sold millions of copies of his pamphlet in the world, exhorting young people to fight peacefully against the powers of finance capitalism. He inspired protests like *Occupy* in the United States and *Los Indignados* in Spain. He also recognized the influence on him of Jean-Paul Sartre, who was his teacher at the Ecole normale supérieure. I intend to show that the explosion of new media did not signal the death of the intellectual’s textual intervention.

To conclude, I firmly believe that this is the right time to conduct such a thesis for three reasons. Firstly, too many secondary sources on the topic of the French *intellectuel engagé* ignored the new generation of intellectuals after Sartre and by doing so, undermined any chance of intellectual renewal. Secondly, Hessel’s bestsellers cannot be denied and should be acknowledged in the academic world and more generally, at a time when politics are often bound to inaction, scared by poll results or paralyzed by their globalized and interconnected interests. Thirdly, the case study of Hessel could prove that intellectual figures from the *aging* Europe can play a role in today’s world. My aim will now be to show that the genre of *littérature engagée* can still have a large-scale impact and spread through media.

Chapter 1 – Forms of intellectual intervention between the Dreyfus affair and the Liberation

In order to understand how Sartre came to be seen as a model intellectual for the twentieth century and who were the precursors to his philosophical and literary project, the forms of intervention of the classic intellectual between the Dreyfus Affair and the Liberation will be analyzed in this first chapter. The century of the intellectual was triggered by Zola's open letter "J'accuse" on 13th January 1898 in the newspaper *L'Aurore*, but above all by the petition that ensued the next day: a collective act that defended truth and justice over the honour of the army. The chapter ends with the Liberation as intellectuals relied on other media after the Second World War to reach the masses and therefore the modern intellectual will be defined in Chapter Two. At the heart of the contrast between classic and modern intellectuals is a media revolution that turned a narrow intellectual debate into a wide-ranging societal debate. Between these two historical events, the Dreyfus Affair and the Liberation, intellectuals gradually became aware of their existence as a status class, their lack of reciprocity with the masses, and their historicity. These realizations are visible in their writing and in the different media they used in the first half of the twentieth century. I will successively analyze the following forms of intellectual intervention in the first half of the twentieth century: petitions and manifestos, leagues, the Université Populaire, reviews, and literature.

Petitions and manifestos: the self-definition of the intellectual camps

Petitions and manifestos during the Dreyfus Affair signalled the death of the clerk – defined by Julien Benda in 1927 in *La trahison des clercs* as a detached and rational observer of society. Although it can sometimes be difficult to distinguish between a petition and a manifesto in practice, in theory we will define a petition as a written request addressed to a specific authority and signed by public figures, whereas a manifesto is a public statement that is not addressed to a specific recipient but rather to public opinion, signed by public figures and that usually calls to action. In *Les Intellectuels en France de l'Affaire Dreyfus à nos jours*, Ory and Sirinelli highlighted the contradictory nature of the petition:

Contemporaine de l'installation de la démocratie dans les mœurs politiques nationales, la pétition d'intellectuels adopte d'emblée, il est vrai, une figure

originale, voire ambiguë: reconnaissante de la loi du nombre, elle l'applique à une élite.³⁹

Other manifestos and petitions had been signed by public figures before the Dreyfus Affair but what makes those of 1898 distinctive is their political stance. In his book *Intellectuels et passions françaises, Manifestes et pétitions au 20ème siècle*, Sirinelli mentions the manifesto “Les artistes contre la Tour Eiffel” published in *Le Temps* on 14th February 1887 in which writers, painters, sculptors and architects had defended the “intact” beauty of Paris a few months before the actual construction of the tower. They had protested against the project in the name of art and beauty but had remained apolitical. This chapter will provide an analysis of petitioners and the political influence of their texts up to the Second World War. Dozens of petitions were signed during this period; therefore I have selected the petitions that had the most impact or those that had a defining function for intellectuals and society.

Emile Zola set a precedent for intervening in public affairs in the name of universal justice and truth. The writers, scientists and scholars who then signed a series of manifestos in *L'Aurore* calling for a retrial also set a precedent in the sense that they acted collectively on a political matter for the first time. The day following Zola's open letter to the French president Felix Faure, on 14th January 1898, *L'Aurore* published a manifesto titled “Une protestation” asking for a retrial. It is important to note that the order of its signatories was not alphabetical. At the top of the list can be read:

Emile Zola; Anatole France, de l'Académie française; Duclaux, directeur de l'Institut Pasteur; Jean Ajalbert; [...]

The presence of Zola's name at the very beginning is understandable since he was the instigator of the revolt in *L'Aurore*. The novelist Anatole France was associated with the prestige of the *Académie française*. France would also write about his involvement as an intellectual in the Affair in his 1901 book, *Monsieur Bergeret à Paris*. The third name on the list, Emile Duclaux, director of the Pasteur Institute, brought his credibility as a scientist and proved that the Affair was not just a matter of *lettrés*. The fourth name was Jean Ajalbert, a writer who had worked for Clémenceau's newspaper *La Justice* and was involved in the Dreyfusard newspaper

³⁹ Ory and Sirinelli, *Les Intellectuels en France*, p.20.

Les Droits de l'homme. Therefore, the presence of his name in the fourth place could be explained by the fact that Clémenceau published *L'Aurore* and Ajalbert was also one of the first Dreyfusards. This list reveals that petitions and manifestos were structured according to the prestige, merit and loyalty of their signatories. The list kept growing in the following publications of the newspaper. Their public intervention to denounce state corruption gave rise to a wave of anti-intellectualism led by Maurice Barrès, Ferdinand Brunetière and Charles Maurras. Therefore the first form of intellectual intervention analyzed in this thesis, petitions and manifestos, represents the confrontation between Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards. This form is constitutive of the classic intellectual but progressively lost its popularity and impact as the intellectual evolved.

Clemenceau, who was the chief editor of *L'Aurore*, used the term “*intellectuels*” – in italics in the original text – in an article on 23rd January 1898 to describe the petitioners defending Dreyfus. For the first time, the term gained a positive connotation and broke away from the image of the self-absorbed artist. On 1st February 1898, Barrès wrote an article in *Le Journal* condemning ‘la protestation des intellectuels!’ and by doing so he contributed to the popularization of the term. By “*intellectuels*”, Barrès meant “Dreyfusards”. He accused them of stepping outside their specialism to claim a universal knowledge they did not possess. During the Third Republic, there would be more petitions from left-wing intellectuals standing as a *contre-pouvoir* whereas right-wing intellectuals tended to support the government.

Dreyfusards were regarded as traitors to the national cause as their universalism tended to override patriotic interests. The Affair would create an opposition between nationalists, who defended a collective national identity, and universalists, who advocated universal equality regardless of particulars of religion and individual characteristics. In fact, even the socialists were divided, as some of them initially saw the Affair as a bourgeois problem. The far right and the far left were equally anti-intellectual. The Affair also exacerbated the anti-Semitism that was already rampant in France. The anti-Semite movement believed Dreyfus was a traitor because he was Jewish and therefore implied that he was not really French. This position questioned Republican universalism. Jean Jaurès would become one of the most involved defender of Dreyfus, but at the beginning of the Affair in 1894, he was convinced of the captain’s guilt and thought that if the latter had not been

sentenced to death yet it was because of “un prodigieux déploiement de la puissance juive pour sauver l'un des siens”. Zola and Clémenceau also had to be persuaded to back the Dreyfus cause. The journalist Bernard Lazare was arguably more proactive in his campaign, since Zola only published his « J'accuse... ! » four years after Dreyfus's arrest. When looking at Zola's open letter, it is clear that he defended all men through Dreyfus and called upon the sense of universalism born from the Enlightenment:

Je n'ai qu'une passion, celle de la lumière, au nom de l'humanité qui a tant souffert et qui a droit au bonheur.⁴⁰

He also clearly referred to the universal values of truth and justice by using the words «vérité » seventeen times and « justice » twelve times in his open letter. Jaurès also defended universalism when opposing certain socialists like Jules Guesde who argued that Dreyfus was a bourgeois officer and who published in July 1898 a manifesto titled « Les prolétaires n'ont rien à voir dans cette bagarre ». Jaurès believed universalism and socialism were compatible:

Je pourrais répondre que si Dreyfus a été illégalement condamné et si, en effet, comme je le démontrerai bientôt, il est innocent, il n'est plus ni un officier ni un bourgeois: il est dépouillé, par l'excès même du malheur, de tout caractère de classe ; il n'est plus que l'humanité elle-même, au plus haut degré de misère et de désespoir qui se puisse imaginer. [...]

Certes, nous pouvons, sans contredire nos principes et sans manquer à la lutte des classes, écouter le cri de notre pitié ; nous pouvons dans le combat révolutionnaire garder des entrailles humaines ; nous ne sommes pas tenus, pour rester dans le socialisme, de nous enfuir hors de l'humanité.⁴¹

Jaurès wanted his fellow socialists to understand that by defending justice and truth, they would defend the working class too. Despite the “victory” of the Dreyfusards in July 1906 when the Supreme Court of Appeals proclaimed Dreyfus' innocence, the intellectual Right was ideologically dominant, especially during the interwar period with the heyday of Maurras' nationalist movement, *Action française*, which we will analyze in a further point.

⁴⁰ Emile Zola, “J'accuse...!”, *L'Aurore*, 13th January 1898.

⁴¹ Jean Jaurès, “L'intérêt socialiste”, *Les Preuves* [1898], edited by Vincent Duclert, (Paris: La Découverte, 1998), pp.47-48.

Some intellectuals participated in a second wave of petitions before the First World War: in 1913, they protested against the “Three-year Law” that would raise the duration of military service from two to three years. This time, Clémenceau who warned public opinion of the German threat was in favour of the law, while Jaurès and the socialist political party, the French Section of the Workers’ International, were against it. *L’Humanité* published on 13th March 1913 a petition titled “Pétition des universitaires” against the new law, with Anatole France’s name as the top of the list. This petition was different from the petitions published in the Dreyfus Affair as it was mainly signed by academics who taught at the Collège de France and La Sorbonne, and students. Still, the petition claimed to defend “la vie intellectuelle et économique du pays”. In the following days, students would also sign other petitions such as the text titled “Pour la dignité nationale, contre l’affolement militaire”. Students’ participation to these petitions in 1913 is understandable, as the new law would apply to them. It can also be seen as the first step towards the democratization of petitions since students represented the majority of signatories. The intellectual hierarchy was still prevalent as Anatole France’s name and prestige preceded the rest of the signatories on that list, but his example showed that he was embracing his historicity.

Petitions disappeared during the First World War when the general consensus was around the defence of the country, but the war of manifestos would begin straight after the War. *L’Humanité* published on 26th June 1919 a text written by Romain Rolland, “Déclaration d’indépendance de l’esprit”, in which he claimed that intellectuals had to distance themselves from governments and advocate internationalism. This was followed by another manifesto on 19th July 1919, in *Le Figaro*, written by Henri Massis and titled “Pour un parti de l’intelligence”, which defended intellectual patriotism. It was signed by the nationalist Charles Maurras, among other intellectuals from the right and far right. Their objective was to defend western civilization from communism. Writers, whose names appeared in alphabetical order this time, signed both manifestos, but unlike during the Dreyfus Affair and the “three-year law”, no academics signed them. It seems that this battle of manifestos was internal to the French intelligentsia who was trying to define its camps again after the *union sacrée* of the First World War.

In the interwar period, intellectuals also disagreed on the future of France in Europe. There was a clear pacifist message in the 15th April 1927 petition that was

signed by 160 intellectuals to denounce the new “Loi Paul-Boncour” on the organization of the nation in war time:

Ce texte nous semble abroger pour la première fois en temps de guerre toute indépendance intellectuelle et toute liberté d’opinion, supprimer le droit de penser.

Normaliens, including Raymon Aron and Jean-Paul Sartre, who would be directly impacted by the Second World War, also signed the petition. But the political polarization became more pronounced and visible in the successive manifestos and counter-manifestos. For example, on 18th January 1931, *Notre temps* published a “Manifeste contre les excès du nationalisme, pour l’Europe et pour l’entente franco-allemande”, while a week later, *La Revue française* published a “Manifeste des jeunes intellectuels ‘mobilisables’ contre la démission de la France”. In parallel, the 1930s saw a period of non-conformism with the emergence of « moralist intellectuals »⁴² as described by Michel Winock. These intellectuals were in favour of a spiritual revolution and refused to align themselves with a political party. They believed in a third way, rejecting capitalism and communism, but the threat of fascism pushed them to join the *Comité de vigilance des intellectuels antifascistes*, which had more than 6000 members at the end of 1934⁴³. Petitions in the 1930s also reveal different positions on the Spanish Civil War that took place from July 1936 to April 1939. On the Left, the “Déclaration des intellectuels républicains au sujet des évènements d’Espagne” published in December 1936 in *Commune* denounced international fascism and claimed that France could not remain neutral and rely on its non-intervention policy anymore. As explained by Sirinelli, this petition stood out from previous ones as its signatories were divided into groups: the first one gathered academics, while the second one gathered writers such as Romain Rolland, André Gide, Aragon, Julien Benda, but actually included artists, architects and other public figures.⁴⁴ This hierarchy contrasted with the 1919 manifesto “Déclaration d’indépendance de l’esprit” that had been signed by writers only. A year later, Intellectuals of the Right published their “Manifeste aux intellectuels espagnols” on 10 December 1937 in *Occident* that was aimed at Spanish nationalist intellectuals this time.

⁴² Michel Winock, “Les intellectuels dans le siècle”, *Vingtième siècle, revue d’histoire*, 1984, Volume 2, Numéro 1, p.6.

⁴³ Emmanuel Lemieux, *Edgar Morin, L’Indiscipliné*, (Paris: Seuil, 2009), p.68.

⁴⁴ Jean-François Sirinelli, *Intellectuels et passions françaises*, (Paris: Fayard, 1990), p.106.

Pacifism in 1938, before the Munich Conference, was still advocated by intellectuals, but petitions show that French society in general wanted peace. In fact, André Delmas the Secretary-General of the national union of teachers and Henri Giroux the Secretary-General of the national union of post office and telecommunications service wrote a very popular public petition on 26 September 1938, titled “Nous ne voulons pas la guerre”. Intellectuals but also primary school teachers signed the petitions that attracted 150,000 signatures in two days.⁴⁵ Still, pacifism was soon replaced by resolution, as Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia despite the Munich Agreement. The War was inevitable. Censorship and mobilization in the army would prevent intellectuals from publishing and signing petitions during the War but they would resort to other modes of intervention.

This first part of the chapter demonstrated the shift among French intelligentsia from the initial opposition between Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards, or universalism and nationalism, to the ideological opposition between Communism and Capitalist Western civilization. This form of intervention required more than a signature at the bottom of a text; it pushed intellectuals to position themselves, choose their camp, change camps and join forces around Pacifism at times. It also revealed a certain hierarchy of intellectuals in the first petitions defined by prestige and loyalty. From 1913 and the “three-year law”, petitions were also signed by academics and students, even though intellectuals still appeared to be leaders. In term of efficiency, only the manifestos published during the Dreyfus Affair by the Dreyfusards can really be credited for their impact. They drew the public’s attention to an injustice and really influenced the outcome since Dreyfus was retried, exonerated and reinstated as a captain. On one hand, it is clear that certain petitions and manifestos were internal to the intelligentsia and were meant to define it, even if they were published in the public sphere. On the other hand, petitions that were shared with other categories of the population were meant to define society and in this case, intellectuals played a minor role but made one step towards Sartre’s concept of reciprocity. This section also confirmed that *engagement* was not self-evident. After all, even Zola and Clémenceau needed to be persuaded to defend

⁴⁵ François Paulhac, *Les Accords de Munich et les origines de la guerre de 1939*, (Paris: Vrin, 1988) p.124.

Dreyfus. It is also what Sartre would describe as *audace précautionneuse*⁴⁶ when describing Gide's cautious *engagement* after his death.

Leagues: the intellectuals' regional propaganda units

Intellectuals would also take part in forms of verbal and militant action, described by Ory and Sirinelli as "prototypical".⁴⁷ The Third Republic notably witnessed the development of leagues, which appeared in the 1880s and consisted in political organizations aiming at destabilizing the parliamentary Republic after the fall of the Second Empire. Their creation also coincided with a long economic crisis, *La Grande Dépression*, and therefore echoed an economic and political frustration. They were distinct from political parties – the first political party in France, the *Parti Républicain, radical et radical-socialiste* was not created until 1901 – in the sense that they did not aspire to power and resorted to direct action such as patriotic demonstrations. They often benefited from their own newspapers, regional subsections, youth organizations, security squads and propaganda. The nationalist poet Paul Déroulède founded the far-right *Ligue des Patriotes* in 1882. It called for revenge for the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and quickly became anti-Semitic, xenophobic and violent as the Dreyfus Affair revived it. In addition to the *Ligue des Patriotes* were other far-right leagues: *Ligue de la patrie française*, *Ligue patriotique des Françaises*, *Action française*, *Les Camelots du Roi*, *Jeunesses Patriotes* and *Les Croix du Feu*. While the *Ligue des Patriotes* offered pre-military training and often engaged in violent anti-Semitic protests, the *Ligue de la patrie française* condemned violence and thus was more acceptable to the bourgeoisie⁴⁸. The Dreyfus affair also prompted the creation of Dreyfusard leagues, such as the *Ligue des droits de l'homme* in June 1898, which raised public awareness to defend Alfred Dreyfus.

⁴⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Gide vivant", *Les Temps modernes*, n°66, mars 1951, published in *Situations IV*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p.85.

⁴⁷ Ory and Sirinelli, *Les Intellectuels en France*, p.17.

⁴⁸ 'Ligue de la Patrie française', in *Dictionnaire de l'Histoire de France*, (Éditions Larousse, 2005), 713 <http://www.larousse.fr/archives/histoire_de_france/page/713> [accessed 1 October 2016]

If salons were already authorized and constituted places of social recognition, what motivated the creation of leagues? Before the Dreyfus Affair, salons were formed on the basis of common intellectual affinity and most of them did not have a political orientation:

Chez madame de Caillavet, chez qui se rendirent Jaurès et quelques dreyfusards, avaient aussi fréquenté Jules Lemaître, l'un des phares de la Ligue de la Patrie française [...].⁴⁹

Some salons even brought together specific branches of the art world: musicians, painters, sculptors and so forth. However, the Dreyfus Affair politicized salons and led to the institutionalization of the political polarization within the intelligentsia in the form of leagues. Salons had been highly elitist in the sense that these private literary gatherings were organized by invitation from the host, usually a *salonnière*, and were held at her private residence, usually in Paris. At the beginning of the twentieth century, their multiplication signalled the end of their exclusiveness. The development of mass media and education gave intellectuals a public platform to address the masses. Leagues were initiated by intellectuals too, but had regional sections relying on teachers and academics and they represented a much wider network than salons. In the interwar period, the *Ligue française pour la défense des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* would reach its peak with 180,000 members in 1933.⁵⁰ Leagues would place the classic intellectual on the political chessboard.

The Dreyfus Affair also prompted anti-intellectualism whose figureheads were the Anti-Dreyfusards Charles Maurras, Maurice Barrès and Ferdinand Brunetière. There emerged in June 1899 a nationalist and monarchist political movement, *Action française*, which would federate the opponents of republican universalism during the first forty years of the twentieth century. Charles Maurras would become its leader and political theorist. In December 1897, he had already written a letter to Maurice Barrès in which he despised Dreyfus' defenders more than Dreyfus himself:

Le parti de Dreyfus mériterait qu'on le fusillât tout entier comme insurgé. Voilà une affaire essentiellement nationale. Qui y paraît au premier plan? Des

⁴⁹ Christophe Prochasson, *Les Années électriques 1880-1910*, (Paris: La Découverte, 2010), p.21.

⁵⁰ Emmanuel Naquet, 'La Ligue des Droits de l'homme et l'école de la République dans la première moitié du XX^e siècle', *Histoire@Politique*, 9 (2009), 99 <www.cairn.info/revue-histoire-politique-2009-3-page-99.htm> [accessed 1 October 2016]

anarchistes cosmopolites, des socialistes antipatriotes, des Juifs, des Protestants de Danemark et de Suisse!⁵¹

Maurras could not conceive that an individual case could prevail over the collective interest of the French army and that of society. After Clemenceau first used the term “intellectuels” to refer to the Dreyfusards, Barrès also ironically commented on its definition:

Intellectuel: individu qui se persuade que la société doit se fonder sur la logique et qui méconnaît qu'elle repose en fait sur des nécessités antérieures et peut-être étrangères à la raison individuelle.⁵²

Barrès questioned the authority of the University and the scholars it produced. Brunetière, the literary critic and editor of the monthly magazine *Revue des Mondes*, also attacked the legitimacy of scholars to intervene in public debate. Brunetière denounced anti-Semitism but defended the army, which according to him was the guarantor of the development of democracy. In an article published in his magazine in May 1898, Brunetière delegitimized Zola's *engagement* in the Dreyfus Affair:

L'intervention d'un romancier, même fameux, dans une question de justice militaire m'a paru aussi déplacée que le serait, dans la question des origines du romantisme, l'intervention d'un colonel de gendarmerie.⁵³

This was part of the anti-intellectual attack that accused intellectuals of arrogance for stepping outside their specialisms. As for *Action française*, this movement was based on Maurras' doctrine of integral nationalism, which meant placing one's nation above everything else, rejecting the idea of revolution and democracy and instead advocating the return of monarchy. Its organization was well established as it could rely on its satellite *Ligue d'Action française*, created in 1905 to recruit members regionally, produce and distribute propaganda and raise money for conferences. Its *Institut d'Action française* was created in 1906 as an alternative institute for Republican higher education while its daily newspaper *Action française* was created in 1908 and sold in the street by a rebellious student organization called *Fédération*

⁵¹ Charles Maurras, letter to Barrès on 2 December 1897, *Charles Maurras/Maurice Barrès, La République ou le Roi, correspondance inédite 1888-1923*, (Paris: Plon, 1970), p.154.

⁵² Maurice Barrès, “La Protestation des intellectuels!”, *Le Journal*, 1 February 1898.

⁵³ Ferdinand Brunetière, *Après le Procès*, (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1898), p.1.

Nationale des Camelots du Roi. These students were famous for getting involved in street brawls against left-wing organizations. The interwar period would constitute the heyday of Maurras' movement when nationalist feeling was strong and fascism was about to break out.

Even if Maurras was agnostic, the membership of *Action Française* consisted mainly of conservative Catholics because he was in favour of Roman Catholicism as a state religion, which he thought could bring a certain stability and cohesion to the nation. It is important to note that France had passed the 1905 French law on the Separation of the Churches and State that established *la laïcité*. In this context, some Catholics may have thought that Maurras could protect them from the Republic. This assumption raises the following questions: What was Maurras' position on religion in his writing? Did his supporters read his literary work? When Maurras published *Le Chemin de Paradis* in 1894, he received the following review from the Catholic priest and philosopher Henri Bremond:

M. Charles Maurras, un des chefs de la jeune pensée indépendante, dans un recueil de mythes et de fabliaux, nous présente une philosophie de la vie. Il appelle son livre *Le Chemin de Paradis*. Ce paradis n'est pas le nôtre. Lancé tout jeune dans la vie littéraire où il s'est vite fait remarquer, M. Maurras n'est pas ou n'est plus avec nous. Pour lui, tout est dans le plaisir de l'intelligence et le reste est de rien à ses yeux... Bénie soit l'heure où, dépris de la vanité des phrases, nous avons commencé... à comprendre que le cœur vaut mieux que l'intelligence et que l'esprit n'est rien à côté de la vertu.⁵⁴

Bremond used Maurras' intellectualism to denounce the fact that Maurras had abandoned Catholicism. However it seems that the Catholic members of *Action française* were not aware of Maurras' agnosticism. Therefore, this demonstrates that established writers such as Maurras could acquire the status of political leaders and intellectuals, but their supporters were not necessarily their readers. On the list of prerequisites to becoming an intellectual, a solid reputation as a writer and peer recognition could prevail over the actual content of previous literary work. With the 20th century media revolution however, the intellectuals' biographies, bibliographies and any variation in their lines of thought would be made easily available to public opinion that could retrace any *faux pas*. Pope Pius XI condemned *Action française*

⁵⁴ Henri Bremond, *L'Univers*, 4 February 1895, quoted in Michael Sutton, *Charles Maurras et les Catholiques français, 1890-1914: nationalisme et positivisme*, (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1994), p.152.

in 1926 for its negative influence on young Catholics, atheism, agnosticism, anti-Christianity, anti-Catholicism and amoralism, which triggered the decline of Maurras' political movement.⁵⁵

With their regional propaganda units, leagues constituted a platform for the intellectual to reach the masses. Still, this one-way system crystallised the lack of reciprocity between the intellectual and the masses in the sense that leagues were initiated by intellectuals who stood at the top of those regional ramifications. If petitions and manifestos can be primarily seen as a tool used by intellectuals of the Left who rebelled against the government, leagues primarily served intellectuals of the Right and were counter-revolutionary.

L'Université populaire: a failed attempt at reciprocity

In parallel, the Université Populaire emerged at the peak of the Dreyfus Affair, giving free lectures on humanist topics in order to fight against the spread of anti-semitism in France. The worker and activist Georges Deherme created the first Université Populaire in 1899, *La Coopération des idées*, which would constitute a platform for Dreyfusard intellectuals by enabling them to leave academia to talk to the people. According to Lucien Mercier, there were 15 Universités Populaires at the end of 1899, 116 in 1900 and 124 in 1901 with 50 000 members.⁵⁶ For intellectuals, these regional branches situated in working-class areas represented a less elitist form of intervention than petitions. The Dreyfusard and professor of philosophy at the Sorbonne Gabriel Séailles claimed that intellectuals were willing to collaborate on an equal footing with the workers:

Nous ne voulons pas répandre de haut un enseignement dogmatique qui laisse étrangers les auditeurs et les maîtres, nous voulons fonder un enseignement mutuel, fraternel, une amitié pour reprendre le mot dont se désignaient les communes du moyen âge. Il faut que les « intellectuels » et les travailleurs s'unissent: ni les uns ni les autres n'ont d'intérêt contre la vérité, et leur union seule peut donner à l'idée la force avec la précision.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Michel Leymarie, Jacques Prévotat, *L'Action française: culture, société, politique*, (Lille: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2008), pp.163-7.

⁵⁶ Lucien Mercier, *Les Universités Populaires: 1899-1914, éducation populaire et mouvement ouvrier au début du siècle*, (Paris: Editions ouvrières, 1986), p.47.

⁵⁷ Gabriel Séailles, *Education ou révolution* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1904) pp.96-97.

Despite this exhortation to solidarity, in reality, the intellectuals' lectures were too abstract and disconnected from the workers' daily concerns and very few workers gave lectures, thus the initial ambition of creating a shared culture between the intellectuals and the workers faded away. The monopoly of knowledge was still very much in the hands of the intellectual, even though the number of university students had doubled in 15 years, from 19 821 in 1891 to 39 890 in 1906.⁵⁸ Despite its multiplication, the Université Populaire quickly faced an ideological split: some intellectuals advocated the reconciliation of classes while others wanted the working class to be able to understand the class struggle and achieve its social emancipation.⁵⁹ The Université Populaire became an ideological platform, a laboratory for socialism, and disappeared just before the First World War. This particular mode of intervention had failed to provide the reciprocal relationship intellectuals were looking to establish with the masses.

Reviews: an indirect form of intervention relayed by newspapers

Intellectuals gained authority through newspapers, journals and literary magazines at a time when a new cultivated public emerged. The number of university students went from 49,931 in the year 1920-21 to 123,313 in the year 1945-46.⁶⁰ Newspapers were key in the Dreyfus Affair as they published the intellectuals' manifestos and drew public attention. Zola's open letter was published in a newspaper with a wide circulation: on 13th January 1898, *L'Aurore* decided to circulate on Parisian streets 300 000 copies, instead of the usual 20 000 to 30 000⁶¹. It is worth noting that Zola was not the first person to write articles refuting the accusations held against Dreyfus. Bernard Lazare, a French Jewish political journalist who had been contacted by Dreyfus's brother, tried to persuade Zola to back the Dreyfus case as early as 1895. Zola finally published *Pour les juifs* in May 1896 to denounce the pervading anti-Semitism that came out from this Affair. He

⁵⁸ Antoine Prost, *L'Enseignement en France*, (Paris: Armand Colin, 1968), p.230.

⁵⁹ Christophe Premat, 'L'engagement des Intellectuels au sein des Universités Populaires', *Tracés, Revue de Sciences Humaines*, (2006), 67-84 (p.78).

⁶⁰ Antoine Prost, Jean-Richard Cytermann, *Une histoire en chiffres de l'enseignement supérieur en France*, *Le Mouvement Social* 4/2010 (n° 233), pp. 31-46.

⁶¹ Alain Pagès, 'J'accuse... Un cri pour la rue', *ITEM*, (2007)
<<http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=187360>> [accessed 1 October 2016].

then published three other articles on the Affair in *Le Figaro* between November and December 1897, but the newspaper stopped publishing his articles so as to retain its more conservative readership. By mentioning the 1881 Press Law at the end of his letter, Zola showed that he was well aware of the risks of his public intervention:

En portant ces accusations, je n'ignore pas que je me mets sous le coup des articles 30 et 31 de la loi sur la presse du 29 juillet 1881, qui punit les délits de diffamation. Et c'est volontairement que je m'expose.⁶²

This law is often regarded as the foundational legal statement on freedom of the press and freedom of speech in France, as it abolished the offence of *délit d'opinion*. At the same time, its articles 26, 30 and 31 protect the President of France as well as the army, courts, public administrations, ministers and civil servants against libel. By confronting the judicial system and members of the army despite the risk of imprisonment, Zola made a strong case for a retrial. On 18th June 1898, he was still convicted for libel and sentenced to one year in jail and a 2000 Francs fine, but took refuge in England.

Publishing articles remained the most common form of intellectual intervention. Régis Debray placed the intellectual within a milieu of “sociability” structured by three poles: university, publishing-editing and media. Therefore, he recognized three successive cycles: 1880-1930 concentrated on the University cycle, 1920-1960 the editorial cycle, and from 1968 onwards the media cycle. Sirinelli disagreed with Debray, arguing that this periodisation of the history of intellectuals was too rigid. He gave the example of the Dreyfusards intellectuals who signed many articles in the newspaper *Le Siècle* to defend the Jewish captain. *Le Siècle* was published between 1836 and 1932, and therefore it appeared before the beginning of Debray's editorial cycle in 1920.

Classic intellectuals resorted to different forms of publication. They favoured press articles in daily newspapers that had either a large readership, such as *Le Journal* (1892-1944) and its 400 000 to 500 000 copies, or a certain social prestige, such as *Le Figaro* (1826 -) and its 60 000 copies. Some of them also created their own reviews and became “arbitres de la légitimité” as described by Anna Boschetti.⁶³

⁶² Emile Zola, ‘J'accuse’, *L'Aurore*, 13 janvier 1898, p.1.

⁶³ Anna Boschetti, *Sartre et les Temps modernes*, (Paris: Les Editions de minuit, 1985), p.31.

Charles Péguy published his journal *Cahiers de la Quinzaine* from 1900 until 1914, when he died. Many leading Dreyfusard writers, including Anatole France, Henri Bergson, Jean Jaurès and Romain Rolland contributed work to it. *Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine* were initially read by lower middle class students and teachers, but as Péguy's views shifted from Dreyfusard to Nationalist, his readership attracted more soldiers and aristocrats.⁶⁴ Péguy dealt with various topics, from colonial oppression, the socialist and working-class movement to literature. In the first two years, he mainly asserted the identity of his journal in which he formed a criticism of socialism and its pacifism. At the end of his articles, he would sign as "le gérant". He encouraged his readership to subscribe to the journal for at least two years, as he believed it was the necessary amount of time to fully understand and reflect on its content, as opposed to daily newspapers:

[...] la contexture n'apparaît, le rythme ne se dessine qu'après un assez long temps; les agités, les affolés donc, les quotidiens, les éphémères, les gens qui veulent recevoir des opinions toutes faites, pour n'avoir pas à travailler, les malins et les avantageux, les gens qui veulent parler de tout sans avoir jamais rien appris n'ont rien à gagner avec nous.⁶⁵

His target readership was clearly limited. He would sell from a couple of hundreds to 2000 copies of his journal and most of his readers would be academics, students and intellectuals.⁶⁶ The bimonthly would not reach the masses. From 1905, Péguy wrote a lot less as his thought was mutating, although he was still publishing other intellectuals. He had turned his back on Jaurès and "le parti des intellectuels", as he described the Dreyfusard academics who got involved in politics. Péguy called for a separation between State and metaphysics. He published in his journal his poems, *Les mystères*, *Les tapisseries*, *Eve*, and his essays, such as *Notre Jeunesse*, *Victor-Marie Comte Hugo*, *L'Argent*, *Notre Patrie*. In fact, its content – collaborations or individual contributions – and size – between 72 and 576 pages – was entirely up to Péguy.⁶⁷ This freedom of publication was also made possible by his financial independence and the absence of advertising in his journal.

⁶⁴ Gerald Leroy, 'Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine', *Cahiers George Sorel*, 5.1 (1987), p.79.

⁶⁵ Charles Péguy, *Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine*, premier cahier de la sixième série, (Paris: L'Artisan du Livre, 1900), p.IX.

⁶⁶ 'Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine', <<http://www.charlespeguy.fr/cahiers>> [accessed 3 July 2017]

⁶⁷ Gerald Leroy, 'Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine', p.80.

If Péguy's *Quinzaine* addressed a small readership and disappeared in 1914, the *Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF)* created in 1909 by André Gide and five other writers constituted a barometer of literary excellence until the First World War and during the interwar period. Nationalism had recently found its voice in the newspaper *L'Action française* founded in 1908, which advocated the theories of its leader Charles Maurras, therefore it is no surprise that the title of Gide's review sounded deliberately nationalistic. The monthly review brought together a generation of intellectuals who had emerged from the Dreyfus Affair and shared the same literary humanism and Republican ideals, but it claimed editorial impartiality. Gide published in the first three numbers his first success, his novel *La Porte étroite*. Its founders wished to emphasize aesthetic issues and to remain independent of any political party. Already in the first year, 1400 numbers had been printed per month while in 1914 the number of subscribers alone was 1400.⁶⁸ According to Paul Léautaud, 12,000 copies were sold per month in 1928.⁶⁹ For Gide, the review's strength was its critical apparatus:

C'est aux notes que nous attachions la plus grande importance, j'entends par là tout l'appareil critique de la revue. Il s'agissait de donner une critique des oeuvres d'autrui, une critique qui ne fut pas de complaisance [...] Je crois que c'est cela qui a fait la valeur de la NRF.⁷⁰

The *NRF* also had its own publishing company that would become Gallimard in 1911. Between 1926 and 1928, the *NRF* underwent significant changes: it dealt with political matters and took position. Gide even created a section for news items. This turning point coincides with Gide's travel to French Equatorial Africa colony between July 1926 and May 1927 with his lover Marc Allégret. On his return, he pre-published *Voyage au Congo* in the *NRF*, in which he criticised French colonial policies. The content of this diary will be analyzed in more details in the last section of this chapter. What is interesting for this section on newspapers and reviews is that its pre-publication in the *NRF* went unnoticed. However, Gide's friend, Léon Blum, dedicated seven editorials in July 1927 to *Voyage au Congo* in his socialist daily newspaper *Le Populaire*. The large extracts on its front page resonated with the

⁶⁸ Auguste Anglès, 'Le fonctionnement de la *NRF* (1909-1914)', *Bulletin de amis d'André Gide*, no. 61, January 1984, pp.11-28.

⁶⁹ Paul Léautaud, *Journal littéraire*, VIII, pp.310-11.

⁷⁰ André Gide, in *Avec André Gide*, Marc Allégret's documentary, 1952, 38'17

public and immediately triggered a debate in the Chamber of deputies. This shows that for intellectuals' reviews to have any impact on the masses, they needed to be relayed by daily newspapers. Still, the *NRF* succeeded in launching new writers and it was certainly the case for Jean-Paul Sartre who published one of his first articles in this review in 1939, on Husserl's phenomenology. Sartre was already showing signs of *engagement*:

Ce n'est pas dans je ne sais quelle retraite que nous nous découvrirons : c'est sur la route, dans la ville, au milieu de la foule, chose parmi les choses, homme parmi les hommes.⁷¹

In 1940, its control was given to Pierre Drieu La Rochelle and its Jewish and communist authors were asked to leave. After the Liberation, the review was forbidden until 1953 because of collaborationism during the war.

Unlike the apolitical *Nouvelle Revue Française*, the review *Clarté* published between 1921 and 1928 (after the creation of the *Groupe Clarté* in 1919) and led by the Communist novelist Henri Barbusse until 1923 was clearly a vector for Soviet Culture and literature. It emerged from the *Clarté* movement or *Internationale de la pensée* between 1919 and 1921. Still, the review seemed to protect its independence from the Communist Party. In an editorial for the review in 1925, its journalist Jean Bernier described *Clarté's* independent position as follows:

Mener une activité que nous estimons communiste en dehors des organisations communistes⁷²

One of its aims was to hold responsible the army generals for the atrocities of the First World War, such as General Nivelle who they accused of wasting French lives. The young intellectuals running *Clarté* had taken part in the War and condemned the old generation that they perceived as bourgeois intellectuals such as Maurice Barrès and Anatole France. A conflict of generations led to the demise of *Clarté*, as the young generation of journalists hoped for a Revolution while Barbusse, who was more of a 19th century intellectual, believed in the power of Reason.

These three examples of publications, *Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine*, *Nouvelle Revue Française*, and *Clarté*, constitute another written form of collective intellectual

⁷¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Une idée fondamentale de la phénoménologie de Husserl: l'intentionnalité', *NRF*, January 1939, in *Situations I* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985) p.32.

⁷² Jean Bernier, 'Où nous en sommes', *Clarté*, n°78, 30th November 1925.

intervention, but they also provided intellectuals with a platform to display their own literary work. Reviews witnessed the evolution of intellectuals' thought: from Dreyfusism to nationalism for Péguy, from aestheticism to current affairs for Gide, and from the rejection of War to the exhortation to revolution and finally the revolutionary disillusionment for *Clarté's* group. Intellectuals could have simply kept publishing their articles in daily newspapers to reach the masses, but they also enjoyed the independence of their own reviews. They could decide whether to have editorial impartiality, decide on the length of their articles, manage their review, as Péguy "le gérant" did, launch new intellectuals, get back at the older generation of intellectuals, and even create their own publishing house. However, the successive publications of Gide's *Voyage au Congo* in the *NRF* and *Le Populaire* confirm that intellectuals could only reach the masses through daily newspapers that echoed and popularized the content of their reviews.

Literature: towards the 'concrete universal'

From the Dreyfus Affair to the interwar period, classic intellectuals were caught in the dilemma of whether or not to participate in the political arena and face their historicity. Between August and December 1914 the pacifist Romain Rolland published eight articles in *Le Journal de Genève* that were gathered in a collection titled *Au-dessus de la mêlée* in 1915. In one of them in September 1914, also titled *Au-dessus de la mêlée*, he asked young French people to refuse the fatality of the war and imperialism. He advocated the humanist and universal values of the Enlightenment, such as justice – 'Un grand peuple ne se venge pas, il rétablit le droit' –, even suggesting the creation of an international court – 'une Haute Cour morale, un tribunal des consciences' – and reason – 'L'esprit est la lumière'. He also lamented the disappearance of critical judgement among intellectuals who had given in to militarism and nationalism:

[...] nous avons une autre tâche, nous tous, artistes et écrivains, prêtres et penseurs, de toutes les patries. Même la guerre déchaînée, c'est un crime pour l'élite d'y compromettre l'intégrité de sa pensée.⁷³

⁷³ Romain Rolland, 'Au-dessus de la mêlée', *Journal de Genève*, n°260, 22nd September 1914.

The pamphlet was not published in France but triggered an outcry among journalists who managed to access it. Peace was inexpressible at a time of legitimisation of the war through patriotic propaganda. Rolland was going against *l'effort de guerre*. For this essay and for his novel *Jean-Christophe*, he would be awarded the Nobel Prize of literature in 1915. After the War, Julien Benda would also create a backlash against the prestige of the intellectual with *La Trahison des Clercs* in 1927. He wanted to restore the intellectual as a detached, rational observer of society. Benda valued ancient Greek philosophy and abstract understanding, as he argues in his first book in 1900, *Dialogues à Byzance*. For him, the intellectual could intervene in society while remaining independent from politics, ideology and religion. Therefore, he had defended Alfred Dreyfus in the name of universal values by writing articles for the Dreyfusard *Revue Blanche*. He felt intellectuals had wrongly rejected the Enlightenment legacy of rationalism. Instead, he defended eternal morality, universalism as opposed to particularism. Benda was wealthy, well connected and not as class-conscious as Sartre. In 1931, Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu counterattacked with their essay *La Décadence de la Nation française*: 'La fuite devant le concret, voilà la terrible trahison des clercs, celle dont la lâcheté idéaliste menace la France et le monde.'⁷⁴

In March 1925, André Gide who was now a highly recognized writer with a very successful literary review, embraced in *Journal des faux-monnayeurs* his new role of *inquiéteur*:

[...] mon livre acheté, je tire la barre, et laisse au lecteur le soin de l'opération; addition, soustraction, peu importe: j'estime que ce n'est pas à moi de la faire. Tant pis pour le lecteur paresseux: j'en veux d'autres. Inquiéter, tel est mon rôle. Le public préfère toujours qu'on le rassure. Il en est dont c'est le métier. Il n'en est que trop.⁷⁵

This statement prefigured his interventions in the French Equatorial Africa colony and in the Soviet Union that would inspire writers such as Sartre and Camus. From July 1925 to February 1926, Gide travelled as an official special envoy of the Colonial Ministry through the French Equatorial Africa colony with his lover Marc Allégret. Although he witnessed the greed of concessionaire companies, he did not openly

⁷⁴ Robert Aron, Arnaud Dandieu, *Décadence de la nation française*, (Paris: Rieder, 1931), p.73.

⁷⁵ André Gide, *Journal des faux-monnayeurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1927), p.96.

denounce colonialism in this diary. In fact, he even described how he travelled carried on a tipoye, accompanied by about sixty porters and how short-handed were the companies he visited – he lamented ‘l’insuffisance de surveillance’⁷⁶. He seemed very detached, alternating a description of his readings with accounts of the companies’ abusive punishments on the natives. Gide admitted that he would only be the messenger as it was not within his power to solve the problems he witnessed.⁷⁷ Still, his trip to Congo resulted in a report to Léon Perrier, the French Minister of the Colonies, who then sent a commission of enquiry to Congo, and as discussed in the previous section of this chapter, his book was pre-published in the NRF and some extracts made the front page in the daily *Le Populaire*.

Gide, who became a fellow traveler in the 1930s, was also invited to the Soviet Union as a guest of the Soviet Union of Writers. His book *Retour de l’URSS* in November 1936 expressed his disillusionment with the promises of communism. In the USSR, he witnessed poverty, depersonalization, and the absence of opposition.⁷⁸ He went further in *Retouches à mon retour de l’URSS* in 1937 by distancing himself from the Party:

Il n’y a pas de parti qui tienne – je veux dire: qui me retienne – et qui me puisse empêcher de préférer, au Parti même, la vérité.⁷⁹

When examining Gide’s writing, from the importance of aesthetic issues in the first year of the *NRF* to his accounts of French Equatorial Africa and the USSR, it is clear that his *engagement* took place in the second half of his career, when he was an established writer. Sartre would become the dominant writer at the Liberation, but he would later confirm that Gide’s interventions had a strong influence on him:

J’acquis très vite l’idée que la vie d’un homme doit se dérouler comme ça: on n’est pas politique au début, et puis vers la cinquantaine, on devient politique comme Zola, par exemple, qui a fait de la politique au moment de l’affaire Dreyfus. [...] je voyais ma vie comme ça: j’aboutissais à la politique. Gide aussi, dans sa dernière période, il a été en U.R.S.S., il a été au Tchad, et il a eu des tas de liens avec la politique d’après la guerre.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ André Gide, *Voyage au Congo* (Paris: Gallimard, 1927), p.27.

⁷⁷ Gide, *Voyage au Congo*, p.101.

⁷⁸ André Gide, *Retour de l’URSS* (Paris: Gallimard, 1936), p.38-45.

⁷⁹ André Gide, *Retouches à mon retour de l’URSS* (Paris: Gallimard, 1937), p.173.

⁸⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, in *La Cérémonie des adieux*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), pp.475-476.

Gide's influence on Sartre is visible very early on in the existentialist's career. Sartre wrote about Gide, as soon as in 1939 in his *Carnets de la drôle de guerre*, mainly to stand out from his predecessor, but also to start a reflexion on what he would soon call *l'universel singulier*. Sartre did not mention *Voyage au Congo* or *Retour de l'URSS*, but he read Gide's *Journal*.

At the same time, Paul Nizan, who had written *Les Chiens de garde* in 1932, also influenced Sartre. They both believed in the revolutionary function of literature and would emulate each other. The affinity between the two former classmates of the ENS was overshadowed by their different views on Marxism. Nizan was a member of the PCF since 1929 while Sartre was apolitical before the War and then his existentialism was not compatible with the idea of mass destiny. Sartre only became a fellow traveller from 1952 to 1956. Still, Sartre admired Nizan's writing, as he demonstrated in 1938 in his review of *La Conspiration*:

[...] non pas un style de romancier, sournois et caché: un style de combat, une arme.⁸¹

Nizan's career preceded that of Sartre: by 1938, Nizan had already published four novels whereas Sartre would start writing novels in 1938. He would resign from the PCF in 1939 following the pact between the Soviet Union and Hitler, and would die in 1940 in the Battle of Dunkirk. With hindsight, in 1948 in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, Sartre described the interwar period as the moment writers of his generation started writing a literature of historicity and the Second World War as the moment they began writing 'une littérature de l'universel concret'.⁸² For Sartre, the aim was to homogenize the writer's experience and that of the reader in order to be a mirror for everyone. Gide, Nizan and the War would have a lasting impact on Sartre whose existentialist philosophy would help come to terms with the trauma of the War.

The first three forms of intervention analyzed in this chapter – petitions and manifestos, leagues, and the Université Populaire – made the intellectuals aware of their lack of reciprocity with the masses. These three media worked as a one-way

⁸¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'La Conspiration par Paul Nizan', in *Situations I*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), p.30.

⁸² Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), pp.260-277

system in which intellectuals by virtue of their monopoly of knowledge set to enlighten the masses but were too disconnected from the reality of the people. However, they gained a new cultivated public thanks to the enlargement of higher education and a certain authority and independence through their reviews. Some of them wrote a literature of *engagement*, which brought them closer to Sartre's *universel singulier*, but they still needed the help of newspapers with a wide readership to be acknowledged by the masses. With the advent of consumer society, intellectuals would have to find new ways to retain the attention of their audience and to tackle its seriality. Soon the rise of a media culture would lead to new opinion leaders. Mass media and ideologies would challenge the universal values, independence and moral authority of the classic intellectual.

Chapter 2 – Forms of intellectual intervention after the Liberation: the mass media. From the explanation of the intellectual's work to the exhortation to *engagement*

The thirty years from 1945 to 1975 following the end of the Second World War in France were described as *Les Trentes Glorieuses* by the demographer Jean Fourastié. More precisely, he named his 1979 book on these decades of economic prosperity *Les Trente Glorieuses ou la révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975*. A decade later, Jean-François Sirinelli referred to this same period as “The Glorious Thirty” of French intellectuals⁸³ because he explained that the majority of French intellectuals at that time went through three successive phases: the philo-communism of 1945-1956, the *engagement* in the Algerian War between 1954 and 1962, and the Third World tendency from the 1960s with intellectuals promoting assistance and self-emancipation programmes in developing countries, such as sub-Saharan countries. At first sight, and with so many opportunities to stand on the public stage, this era could indeed be described as the “Golden Age” of the French intellectual. And yet, it is the same era that witnessed the disengagement of some intellectuals, the questioning of universal values, a wave of ideological disillusionment and the rise of consumer society and the media culture. Last but not least, the mid 1940s witnessed the emergence of Jean-Paul Sartre as a public figure and his existentialist theory that was based on the freedom to define oneself and individual responsibility. In his book *The Existentialist moment, The Rise of Sartre as a Public Intellectual*, Patrick Baert explains that Sartre skillfully managed to reformulate his existentialist themes after the Second World War and appealed to a public that had lived a traumatic socio-political experience.⁸⁴ Sartre would incarnate the modern intellectual, constantly engaging with self-questioning, working on a theory of commitment, and resorting to a range of interventions, which will be examined in chapter 3. In the first issue of *Les Temps Modernes* in October 1945, Merleau Ponty described the impossibility for the intellectual during the War to remain an uncompromising and detached guardian of the universals:

En restant, on se compromettait, en partant on se compromettait, personne n’a les mains propres. Nous avons désappris la “pure morale” et appris une sorte d’immoralisme populaire, qui est sain. [...] Nous sommes dans le monde, mêlés à lui, compromis avec lui.⁸⁵

⁸³ Jean-François Sirinelli, *Génération intellectuelle*, (Paris: Fayard, 1988), p.638.

⁸⁴ Patrick Baert, *The Existentialist moment, The Rise of Sartre as a Public Intellectual*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), p.21.

⁸⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Les Temps Modernes*, October 1945, pp.58-59.

This phase of self-justification after the War was also an opportunity for modern intellectuals to show that they had endured the same moral dilemmas as the masses, and that therefore they belonged with the masses. Still, Sartre asked how the modern intellectual could survive without interlocutor:

[...] nous sommes à la fois contre le P.C. et contre la bourgeoisie. Cela signifie que nous écrivons contre tout le monde, que nous avons des lecteurs, mais pas de public. Bourgeois en rupture de classe mais restés de moeurs bourgeoises, séparés du prolétariat par l'écran communiste, dépris de l'illusion aristocratique, nous restons en l'air, notre bonne volonté ne sert à personne, pas même à nous, nous sommes entrés dans le temps du public introuvable. [...] nous sommes tombés en dehors de l'histoire et nous parlons dans le désert.⁸⁶

Sartre was raising an important question here: whom was the intellectual writing for in the second half of the twentieth century? As early as 1948, Sartre was encouraging intellectuals to use mass media to reach their “virtual” public.⁸⁷ Intellectuals would indeed resort to mass media, but how would they deal with the dilution of information and the erosion of the printed word? This chapter analyzes the different forms of intervention used by intellectuals between the Liberation and today, and seeks to establish whether they changed the course of history and triggered *engagement*.

Before examining these different modes of intervention, it is important to anchor them in the socio-historical context in which the intellectual evolved after the Liberation. I have identified five defining phases for the post-War intellectual. The first one was the intellectual purge that took place from 1944 to 1945. The act of writing during the War would either serve or condemn the intellectuals after the War, depending on the views they had expressed on the Vichy regime and Nazism. The purge can be seen as a consecrating moment for intellectuals who had taken part in the Resistance; it would boost their credentials in the eyes of the masses. The condemnation of collaborationists also accentuated the social responsibility of the intellectual. In the case of Brasillach, editor-in-chief of the extreme-right wing newspaper *Je suis partout* between 1937 and 1943, talent was even an aggravating circumstance in his prosecution.

⁸⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p.319.

⁸⁷ Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, p.321.

The second defining phase is the support granted by certain French intellectuals to the Soviet Union from 1945 to 1956. The Resistance had conferred strength on the PCF, and these intellectuals believed the proletariat was the only potential agent of change in the capitalist society. After the political trials in Eastern countries and the Soviet terror, some intellectuals kept idealizing the Soviet Union and showing self-abnegation for the good of the communist collective purpose. These reactions – or rather absence of reactions – marked a temporary suspension of the intellectual as a guardian of universal values.

The third phase, the Algerian War between 1954 and 1962, would give intellectuals a chance to redeem themselves, although some did not advocate a complete separation of Algeria at the beginning of the War and had an ambiguous stance vis-à-vis the PCF's position on the War. It was a defining time for intellectuals as it differed from the political left/right polarization of intellectuals during the Dreyfus Affair. Some were active on several fronts, from their manifestos and reviews, which provide a written transmission of the war today, to the radicalization of their activism and their exhortation to violence. And yet, their impact was limited as they faced censorship, the consumer culture, new magazines, and a rise in the number of television sets – hence certain indifference from French people.

The fourth phase, May 68, marks a turning point in the history of the modern intellectual who gave way to civic *engagement*. The Algerian War was still on everyone's mind and with it, de Gaulle's authoritarianism. The French were wary of mainstream politics and disappointed by the way Socialists and Radicals had handled the Algerian War. There was a clear disconnection between society and politics. The main goal of May 1968 would be to democratize decision-making in government, the workplace and university. This would be the beginning of Cohn Bendit's charismatic leadership of the student's revolt. This student from the University of Nanterre would take over from the Normalien intellectuals who had led the public debate during the Algerian War. Orthodox Marxism predicted that under capitalism, the growing misery of the workers would generate a revolution. And yet, when the events of May 68 happened, French society was still enjoying the economic growth of the Glorious Thirty, far from Marx's immiseration thesis.⁸⁸ In fact,

⁸⁸ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy: The Process of Capitalist Production* (1867), (New York: International Publishers, 1967) 1.2. pp. 708-09.

the years 1945-1975 saw the development of tertiarization and a new class of salaried employees, and the shrinking of the working class. Moreover, the students – who originated mainly from the middle-class – formed a first-time coalition with another class, the workers. The sociologist Alain Touraine has analyzed this phenomenon as the “Return of the actor”: he defined classic society as a society where institutions and the universal value of Reason dominated individuals. However, Touraine believed that the historical events of the first half of the 20th century had created a new critical sociology that denounced universalism and the violence that was implied in the notions of order and rationality. Instead, this antisociology proposed to place the “actor”, social movements and historicity at the centre of society. Hence in May 68, in his view, social movement represented a collective actor escaping from the yoke of norms and power. May 68 witnessed the democratization of the written word through leafleting, posters, slogans and mural inscriptions, but also a fall in the number of readers of newspapers and reviews. As for intellectuals, after playing the role of opinion leaders during the Algerian War, they would now become followers. They would also have to adapt to their disillusionment with orthodox Marxism and the emergence of *gauchisme* with the French Maoists. In 1960, in *Critique de la raison dialectique*, Sartre had warned of the dangers of “seriality” of the group, a metaphor for the lack of social cohesion in contemporary French society, as described in the introduction to this thesis. This Sartrean concept designates the situation of separation between individuals who may think that they live as a community when they are in fact kept isolated from each other. Sartre believed that seriality could impede historical collective movements. In order to regain individual freedom, he reckoned that a group revolutionary action was vital. May 68 proved that Sartre’s concept of seriality could be overcome.

I would describe the last defining phase as the post-May 68 period, when intellectuals progressively said goodbye to ideologies and provided individual responses to crisis in their own names. May 68 confirmed the intellectual’s incapacity to play a decisive role in social and political debates; instead, social movements took the lead. Sartre was a central figure of left-wing radicalism after the May 68 revolt, when he diversified his forms of intervention. For example, he visited factories in Boulogne-Billancourt to address the workers, and was the editor of the Maoist newspaper *La Cause du peuple*. For him, the intellectual was no longer a sermonizer; the new intellectual was among the mass. In the early 1970s,

revolutionary violence was discredited, as was the PCF for supporting the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Solzhenitsyn's book on the Soviet Gulag published in 1973 called for an antitotalitarian struggle. After decades of lending his support to Soviet and Chinese communism, Sartre changed once again his vision of the intellectual. For him, the intellectual was not a political militant anymore or *l'Ami du Peuple*, intellectuals had to return to their universal roots. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Foucault also advocated human rights by taking part in the campaign *Un bateau pour le Vietnam* that aimed at collecting funds to buy a boat and rescue the Vietnamese refugees at sea, or by supporting Lech Walesa and his Solidarnosc movement. One of Sartre's most famous interventions particularly illustrates this return to the defense of human rights and democracy: his handshake with Aron on 20th June 1979 at a press conference in the Hôtel Lutétia in support of the boat people who were fleeing communism in Vietnam. Sartre believed in universalism, individual responsibility and the birth of a new intellectual, or manual-intellectual. This new public figure would have a profession, synonym of authenticity according to Sartre. The 1970s would witness the resurgence of *droit-de-l'hommisme*, the unconditional advocacy of human rights. The so-called New Philosophers defended the *droit d'ingérence*, the right of a nation to intervene, with the approval of the international community, in another country in the case of a humanitarian emergency. In chapter 4 on Bernard-Henri Lévy, we will also discuss this notion further. This new humanitarian sensibility erased the antihumanist Structuralism and Marxism from the intellectual's memory, despite being described by several critics as pure *droit-de-l'hommisme* – a pejorative neologism used to denounce excessive moralism, an hypocritical posture or the defense of the individual's interests over society. Public opinion also stopped trusting "media intellectuals" who seemed to be conquering public space for their own glory. With renowned programmes such as *Radioscopie* where intellectuals could be put on a pedestal during a one-hour interview on the radio, or *Apostrophe* where they could debate about literature on television every Friday night, book sales and popularity could be influenced by one single intervention. Soon, certain intellectuals would also make their way in the media by writing for national newspapers, creating their own television programme, or becoming consultants on French current affairs for foreign media. When I interviewed the philosopher and sociologist Edgar Morin, he made a distinction

between permanent “media intellectuals” and intellectuals who intervene punctually in the media, like him:

[...] l'étiquette “intellectuel médiatique” couvre ceux qui sont très souvent appelés par les médias, télévisions ou radios, ceux qui ont des chroniques permanentes dans la presse, comme Bernard-Henri Lévy ou [Jacques] Attali, c'est-à-dire toute une catégorie de gens qui ont non seulement une présence, mais un pouvoir dans les médias. En ce qui me concerne, je vais dans des débats télévisés, mais je n'ai malheureusement aucun pouvoir, par exemple mes livres sont très peu recensés dans les journaux et périodiques. Alors, moi, je ne me considère pas comme médiatique.

Morin implied here that media intellectuals could directly influence the success of their books by making the right connections within this Parisian microcosm, which questions these intellectuals' legitimacy and credibility. At the end of this chapter, I will examine their interventions on television, but also their use of the Internet, especially their personal websites, their online reviews and their Twitter accounts.

Essays: answering the social demand for prophetism

In the aftermath of the War and the purge of collaborationists, the intellectuals' responsibility reached its height, and so did their power of judgment. Written forms of intervention produced during the Second World War, whether journalistic or literary, determined the fate of their authors during the purge: Resistance writers enjoyed a certain “heroification” and pulled the strings of the *épuration* by publishing lists of collaborationists through the National Committee of Writers (CNE), while collaborationists were declared guilty on the ground that they had written to the glory of Nazi Germany or Maréchal Pétain. However, the whole process was not as black and white as it seemed. It seems that the title of “Resistance” writer was sometimes hastily self-attributed by individuals who had mixed with the enemy: Sartre's play *Les Mouches* had received the CNE's approval but it was played in a theatre partly funded by Vichy and in front of German soldiers⁸⁹. Beauvoir wrote cultural broadcasts for Radio-Vichy and managed in 1943 to publish her first novel, *L'Invitée*, despite the censorship. This closeness to Vichy-controlled organizations has been retrospectively interpreted by secondary sources as unclear

⁸⁹ Jean-Louis Jeannelle, *Jean-Paul Sartre, Les Mouches*, (Paris: Editions Bréal, 1998), p.27.

intentions, ambition, collaborationism or simply a need to make both ends meet under wartime circumstances, especially for Beauvoir who had been suspended from her teaching job. Camus was living in occupied France from 1942 and worked for the clandestine newspaper *Combat*, before becoming its editor-in-chief. He published *L'Étranger* and *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* in 1942. He was the first intellectual to denounce the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in an editorial in *Combat* on 8th August 1945. Benda lived clandestinely in Carcassonne and then Toulouse and kept writing and sending his work abroad for publication. As for Aron, he had been in London from 1940 to 1945 working as the editor in chief of the review *La France libre*. These key public figures of French intelligentsia gained their credentials from their plays and books written during the War, and from taking part in the Resistance at various degrees – or simply from not openly collaborating with the Nazis.

As a result, these intellectuals were in a strong position after the War to publish essays: they had the public's respect because they had made the right choices during the War. This literary form can be described as a personal reflexion on historical, social or political matters. It is derived from the Latin *exagium*, which means weighing, or evaluating, and from the French infinitive *essayer*, to try. Intellectuals would indeed attempt to make sense of the Second World War and speculate on the Cold War. There was a social demand for prophetism.

Sartre would be a prolific essay writer throughout his career. He would publish ten volumes of *Situations* between 1947 and 1976 whose title echoed his concepts of freedom and situation in *L'Être et le néant* in 1943. According to Sartre, freedom came from the choices made under particular circumstances. Obstacles stimulated our freedom because they pushed us to make choices, which led Sartre to this famous claim in 1944:

Jamais nous n'avons été plus libres que sous l'occupation allemande. Nous avons perdu tous nos droits et d'abord celui de parler; on nous insultait en face chaque jour et il fallait nous taire; on nous déportait en masse, comme travailleurs, comme Juifs, comme prisonniers politiques; partout sur les murs, dans les journaux, sur l'écran, nous retrouvions cet immonde visage que nos oppresseurs voulaient nous donner de nous-mêmes: à cause de tout cela nous étions libres.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'La République du silence', *Les Lettres françaises*, 9th September 1944, n°20

Intellectuals would indeed face their historicity and take a stance on contemporary problems throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Famous intellectuals would publish essays during the five phases identified in the introduction to this chapter. They were especially prolific between 1945 and 1956, when reflecting on Marxism and communism.

The Holocaust would remain a taboo subject for thirty years after the War. Sartre did write *Réflexions sur la question juive* published in 1946 to raise the question of anti-Semitism but only mentioned very briefly the genocide of Jews in Europe:

[...] les journaux consacrent des colonnes entières aux prisonniers de guerre, aux déportés. Va-t-on parler des Juifs ? Va-t-on saluer le retour des rescapés, va-t-on donner une pensée à ceux qui sont morts dans les chambres à gaz de Lublin? Pas un mot. Pas une ligne dans les quotidiens [...]. Pendant quatre ans, la société française a vécu sans eux, il convient de ne pas trop signaler leur réapparition.⁹¹

He did not write on the degree of French responsibility in this genocide nor did he express any personal feeling of guilt for not intervening against the deportation of Jews. Instead, he focused on the psychological profile of the anti-Semite and explained that it is the anti-Semite who “creates” the Jew, not history or religion. This atemporal definition partly explains why Sartre did not mention the Holocaust. His essay is both distinctive – in the sense that he wrote about anti-Semitism at a time when the *épuration* of intellectuals only punished them for constituting a threat to national security – and typical of the post-War intellectual, social and political climate – the State looked to unify the country and did not distinguish between deportees. Among the essays that epitomize the condemnation of fascist and pro-Vichy writers by the intelligentsia of the time is Julien Benda’s 1946 republished *La Trahison des Clercs* - originally published in 1927 - with an added preface. This time, he believed intellectuals had done more than betray their mission of guardians of universal values: they had betrayed their mother country. From the very beginning of his 1946 preface, it is clear that Benda condemns collaborators on the basis of their anti-patriotic activities; no direct mention is made of anti-Semitism, despite the fact that

⁹¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Réflexions sur la question juive*, (Paris: Edition Paul Morihien, 1946), p.86.

Benda, a Jew himself, had been the target of anti-Semitic attacks from Charles Maurras and *Action française*.

The act of writing essays was also part of the evolving reflexion of intellectuals on communism; therefore the comparison of their successive works can tell us a lot about their line of thought. The Manichean logic inherited from the Resistance urged intellectuals to join the winners' camp and make up for lost time. Stalin's Soviet Union and Red Army were praised by the young generation of intellectuals for winning over Nazi Germany. Therefore, the twelve years following the Second World War saw the quasi-monopoly of Soviet communism on intellectual minds. The intellectual's attraction to communism must also be put into perspective because several intellectuals rejected or steered clear of communism. Already in 1945, ten years before his book *L'Opium des intellectuels*, Raymond Aron wrote an essay to describe the communist ideology with scepticism:

Je propose d'appeler "religions séculières" les doctrines qui prennent dans les âmes de nos contemporains la place de la foi évanouie et situent ici-bas, dans le lointain de l'avenir, sous la forme d'un ordre social à créer, le salut de l'humanité.⁹²

Raymond Aron purely and simply rejected communism and placed himself outside the intellectual mainstream. Aron had studied Marx for his thesis titled *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire* in 1938, which then allowed him to publish his 1948 essay *Le Grand Schisme*, in which he analyzed the situation of the Cold War. The title of his first chapter, *Paix impossible, Guerre improbable*, sums up his views on the impossible dialogue between two opposed ideologies, American liberalism and Soviet communism. Aron believed that France should ally itself with the United States in order to benefit from the protection of its nuclear power. He believed that French intellectuals had only found refuge in communism after the Second World War to appease their guilty conscience. In his 1950 article "Fidélité des apostats", he denounced 'la sourde mauvaise conscience des intellectuels à l'égard des hommes d'action.'⁹³ Aron was here criticizing the French communist intellectuals who regarded the Soviets as potential guides for the proletariat. He then developed this idea in 1955 in the essay *L'Opium des Intellectuels*, with a direct reference to

⁹² Raymond Aron, *L'Âge des empires et l'avenir de la France*, (Paris: Editions défense de la France, 1945), p.288.

⁹³ Raymond Aron, 'Fidélité des apostats', *La table ronde*, 30 (1950), p.55

Marx for whom religion was 'the opium of the people'. Aron's rationalism and humanism opposed Sartre's Marxist existentialism that combined group struggle and individual responsibility. Albert Camus also made clear in his articles in *Combat* between 1944 and 1947 that he rejected any ideological associations, including Marxism and Existentialism. He had been a member of the Algerian Communist Party between 1935 and 1937 but had left it because he did not accept its Marxist conception of revolution and its legitimization of violence. For him, communism was totalitarianism and he condemned it as he had condemned fascism. His 1951 essay, *L'Homme révolté*, encapsulates his views on Marxism:

Loin du pouvoir, sa traduction historique était la violence révolutionnaire; au sommet du pouvoir, elle risquait d'être la violence légale, c'est-à-dire la terreur et le procès.⁹⁴

Camus was here comparing this episode to the original "Terreur" of 1793-1794, which had been designed to prevent an aristocrat counter-revolution but mainly consisted in the repression of ordinary people. Robespierre's objective to make the Republic a morally united and patriotic community had translated in a wave of executions, and therefore Camus believed that Stalinism was now putting French Republican values in jeopardy for the sake of a revolutionary project. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's opinion on violence was less definite than Albert Camus's but more cautious than Sartre's. Firstly, in "*Humanisme et Terreur*", published in 1947, Merleau-Ponty felt close to Marxism and justified the Moscow Trials, even though he maintained a critical stance on the Soviet revolution:

La révolution s'est immobilisée sur une position de repli: elle maintient et aggrave l'appareil dictatorial tout en renonçant à la liberté révolutionnaire du prolétariat dans ses Soviets et dans son Parti et à l'appropriation humaine de l'État.⁹⁵

In this essay, published in *Les Temps modernes*, Merleau-Ponty gave Soviet Union the benefit of the doubt, as he still believed in the proletariat's mission. He would soon fall out with Sartre who became a fellow traveller during the years 1952-56. Merleau-Ponty resigned from *Les Temps modernes* in 1953. In "*Les Aventures de la Dialectique*" in 1955, in which he opposed Sartre's "ultrabolchevism", Merleau-

⁹⁴ Albert Camus, *L'Homme révolté*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), p. 297.

⁹⁵ Marcel Merleau-Ponty, *Humanisme et Terreur*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), p.49.

Ponty explained the philosophical reasons of his rupture with Marxism. He believed it was time “to strip of privilege” the Soviet Union. This book confirmed the split between the two co-founders of the review *Les Temps modernes*. Sartre ultimately rejected communism when the Soviet Army entered Budapest in 1956. He expressed his disillusionment in an essay published in *Les Temps modernes* in 1956 and 1957, *Le Fantôme de Staline*, in which he condemned the intervention of Soviet Union and its apologists in the PCF.

These successive essays reflect a divided intelligentsia, with the splits between Camus and Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. They also reveal that while certain intellectuals like Aron rejected communism from the start, others like Sartre, Camus and Merleau-Ponty operated a volte-face in the first half of the 1950s. In supporting the violence and injustice in Eastern Europe between 1947 and 1956, they had given up their role of guardian of universal values. They had presented the actions of the Soviet Union after 1945 as self-defence of the revolution and ignored the victims. The end justified the means. By doing so, the intellectuals were also breaking with their traditional vocation as they abandoned their autonomous reason to support an ideology. Emile Zola was not serving any ideology when defending Alfred Dreyfus, he was defending universal values. Raymond Aron described intellectuals who subscribed to communism as “progressive intellectuals” and defined progressivism as follows:

Le progressisme consiste à présenter des thèses proprement communistes comme si elles émanaient spontanément d’une réflexion indépendante.⁹⁶

The progressive intellectuals also embraced self-abnegation: they had given up their superior moral authority and knowledge to be part of the organic and collective intelligence of the revolutionary movement. Therefore, what could their readership make of their subsequent stances on Algeria and May 68 ? Still, between the Second World War and the beginning of the Algerian War, they had marked their time with essays that still resonate today. When I interviewed Jean-Pierre Barou, who worked with Sartre on *La Cause du Peuple* and the launching of *Libération*, he deplored the lack of substance in the work produced by today’s intellectuals:

⁹⁶ Raymond Aron, *Marxismes imaginaires*, (Paris, Gallimard, 1970), p.71.

[...] si je vous dis « Citez-moi un livre de Sartre », vous allez me dire « *L'Être et le Néant* ». [...] « Citez-moi un livre de Camus », vous allez me dire « *L'Homme révolté* ». Ils [les intellectuels d'aujourd'hui] ne marquent pas leur époque. Je vous défie de me donner un titre d'eux ! Ils renouvellent, ils renouvellent, ils produisent, ils produisent.

I will examine in chapters four and five modes of intervention used by intellectuals in the post-Sartre era. The following form of intervention analyzed in this chapter, reviews and newspapers, demonstrates willingness on the intellectuals' part to clarify and disseminate their work. In fact, as I explained above, some of their essays were published in their reviews and newspapers. Furthermore, during the Algerian War, intellectuals would need their reviews and newspapers in order to return to their original medium, petitions and manifestos. This proves once more that the history of the French intellectual is an alternation of individual acts and collective enterprise.

Reviews, newspapers and petitions: dissemination of literature and appeal to opinion

From June to September 1944, the Provisional Government issued four orders to set the foundations of the new press. They reaffirmed freedom of press, set economic, financial and moral criteria for this sector and dissolved newspapers that had been published during the Occupation. Newspapers and reviews would now have to display the names of their editorial board, publish their budget and were not allowed to accept financial help from foreign countries. After the Second World War, the *NRF* was discredited and banned for collaborationism. Under German pressure, Gallimard had published the literary magazine that had become a collaborationist journal edited by Drieu la Rochelle. In the end, publishers are those who survived this phase the best, as opposed to journalists and editors. Intellectuals spared them the black lists, as their presence was needed for the very existence of intellectuals.⁹⁷ After the Liberation, Sartre, Camus, Aragon and Malraux – who all figured in Gallimard's catalogue – defended Gallimard because they needed his backing to publish their own work. One could argue though that publishers were as guilty of *intelligence avec l'ennemi* as their authors as a text cannot be harmful if it is not

⁹⁷ Pierre Assouline, *L'épuration des intellectuels*, (Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 1985), p.99. 'Car un auteur sans éditeur n'existe pas et pour ne pas le perdre, l'homme de lettres peut aller très loin.'

printed and distributed. The *NRF* would resurface in 1953 thanks to Jean Paulhan and Marcel Arland, but in the meantime Sartre benefited from a void on the intellectual review market. From the very beginning, *Les Temps modernes* were more political than the *NRF*. Its initial hard core was made up of former Resistants: Raymond Aron, Simone de Beauvoir, Michel Leiris, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Albert Ollivier, Jean Paulhan, and of course its director Jean-Paul Sartre. Aron would resign in 1946 because the review supported communism and had communist contributors. The review would transform Sartre's personal success into a school of thought: existentialism. It would also define the post-war intellectual right from its first issue. In 'La Présentation', Sartre exhorted intellectuals to action through writing:

L'écrivain est en situation dans son époque: chaque parole a des retentissements. Chaque silence aussi. [...] La condamnation de Dreyfus, était-ce l'affaire de Zola? L'administration du Congo, était-ce l'affaire de Gide? Chacun de ces auteurs, en une circonstance particulière de sa vie, a mesuré sa responsabilité d'écrivain. L'occupation nous a appris la nôtre. Puisque nous agissons sur notre temps par notre existence même, nous décidons que cette action sera volontaire.⁹⁸

For some intellectuals, taking action translated into joining the PCF or becoming a fellow traveler. The polarization of the world, between American capitalism and Soviet communism, would soon convince more intellectuals to join the PCF. It seemed to offer a better connection with the working class but in fact the PCF distrusted intellectuals, more particularly Sartre's existentialist influence on young people. Existentialism was considered by the PCF as a bourgeois ideology that interfered with Marxism. *Les Temps modernes* would also contribute to defining the post-war intellectual by publishing Sartre's *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* between February and July 1947:

L'écrivain "engagé" sait que la parole est action: il sait que dévoiler c'est changer et qu'on ne peut dévoiler qu'en projetant de changer.⁹⁹

Sartre made political commitment ineluctable for the contemporary writer. For this reason, Sartre distinguished between prose, a communicative tool anchored in the

⁹⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Présentation des *Temps modernes*' (1945), in *Situations II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), pp.13-15.

⁹⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, in *Situation II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p.73.

writer's context, and poetry, a non-utilitarian object. In parallel with *Les Temps modernes*, three other intellectual reviews were launched or revived on the Left, confirming that the legitimate intellectual after the War belonged to the Left.

As explained in the first chapter, the Catholic philosopher Emmanuel Mounier had launched *Esprit* in 1932 around the philosophical school of thought of Personalism with the objective of giving the individual a sense of responsibility at a time of economic crisis. He was one of the « moralist intellectuals » who hoped for a third way, rejecting both individualism and collectivism. After the Liberation, he intended to challenge the dominant intellectual capital of *Les Temps modernes*. In fact, *Esprit* may have had a very similar, if not higher circulation than its rival. *Les Temps modernes* printed 10,000 copies per issue at the end of the 1940s, whereas *Esprit* printed 12,000 copies per issue in 1950.¹⁰⁰ The two reviews differed in their approach of existentialism – Sartre was an atheist existentialist whereas Mounier was a Christian existentialist – but they both wrote against Stalinism, colonialism and torture in Algeria. Journalists from both reviews would even join Sartre's short-lived movement *Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire* in 1948 – I will examine the RDR's ambitions further in this chapter.

In June 1946, the librarian at the Bibliothèque Nationale and writer Georges Bataille also launched his review *Critique*, described very briefly in the introduction to the first issue as follows:

Critique publiera des études sur les ouvrages et les articles paraissant en France et à l'étranger. Ces études dépassent l'importance de simples comptes-rendus. A travers elles, *Critique* voudrait donner un aperçu, le moins incomplet qu'il se pourra, des diverses activités de l'esprit humain dans les domaines de la création littéraire, des recherches philosophiques, des connaissances historiques, scientifiques, politiques et économiques.

The first issue would indeed deal with literature and philosophy, but also 'L'économie française à la recherche d'un moteur', 'De Gaulle dictateur?', 'Les erreurs stratégiques de Hitler', and 'Les fondements de la guerre et de la paix en U.R.S.S.' It aimed at decompartmentalizing literature, philosophy, science, politics and economics and study their relationships. Still, despite the connections made between these different fields, *Critique* did not offer any editorial statement and

¹⁰⁰ Michel Winock, *Histoire politique de la revue "Esprit": 1930-1950* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1975), pp.241-42.

remained a bibliographic review. According to Sylvie Patron, Bataille's ambition fitted the encyclopaedism of the mid-twentieth century and aimed at answering the question: what is universal history?¹⁰¹

The fourth intellectual review of the Left that emerged after the War was the review of militant Marxism *La Nouvelle Critique*, created in December 1948 by the PCF. It differed from the other three reviews since it was loyal to the Party. Its role was to popularize communist ideas among intellectuals, but they were not to develop new ideas. Between 1948 and 1955, its hard core was made up of its editor in chief Jean Kanapa, Victor Joennès, Annie Besse, Pierre Daix, Jean-Toussaint Desanti, Jean Fréville, Victor Leduc and Henri Lefebvre, but after the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its revelation about Stalin's crimes, the editorial board completely changed. In 1963, the review would even publish an issue on cult of personality. From 1965, it started discussing Louis Althusser's innovative ideas on the antihumanist side of Marxism. Althusser encouraged an internal ideological debate between Marxists, which was against the dogmatism of the Party. In 1966, the central committee of Argenteuil granted more freedom to the review by putting an end to the Party's ideological supervision over artistic and literary debates. The review would even establish a dialogue with non-communists groups such as *Tel Quel*. It would keep opening itself until it became too "critical" and disappeared in 1980.

The comparison of these four reviews of the Left, *Les Temps modernes*, *Esprit*, *Critique* and *La Nouvelle Critique*, that all took off after the War, reveals Sartre's undisputed supremacy at the time. By defining literature as action in October 1945, he had set the tone for the three other reviews that could not remain hermetic to their historicity. They would have to define themselves in comparison to *Les Temps modernes*. Despite the variety of topics they discussed and their take on current affairs, the reviews mainly addressed intellectuals, academics and students, but the Algerian War would push intellectuals to intervene more and more in national daily newspapers.

The disillusionment of French intelligentsia towards communism coincides with a new problem: decolonization. From 1947 in the daily *Combat*, Albert Camus

¹⁰¹ Sylvie Patron, 'La revue de Georges Bataille', in Bruno Curatolo and Jacques Poirier, *Les Revues littéraires au XXe siècle*, (Dijon: Editions universitaires de Dijon, 2002), pp.79-89.

started expressing his views on the situation in Maghreb. *Les Temps Modernes* and *Esprit* approached the problem in 1950. But the blood bath in Morocco and the catastrophe in Diên Biên Phu in 1954 are the two events that placed the French colonies as a matter of priority on the agenda of the intellectuals. Moreover, the colonial question seemed attractive as it forced intellectuals to make definite choices; as opposed to the ambiguous positions they had taken regarding communism. The Algerian war came at the right time to escape from the communist imbroglio.

Intellectuals defied the government with their articles in *Témoignage Chrétien*, *Esprit*, *l'Express*, *France-Observateur*, *Le Monde*, *L'Humanité* and *les Temps Modernes*. For example, ever since 1951, the left-wing journalist Claude Bourdet had denounced Gestapo-style methods in Algeria in *L'Observateur*¹⁰². The Catholic intellectual François Mauriac evoked the same Nazi analogy in January 1955 in *L'Express*¹⁰³. Likewise, the publishers Editions de Minuit, Seuil and Maspero produced eyewitness accounts of torture. Meanwhile, *Témoignages et Documents* reproduced banned articles and books. Still, it would be incorrect to claim that all intellectuals fought right from the start. After all, *Les Temps modernes* only published their first issue on the Algerian War in May 1955¹⁰⁴, six months after it started, while Sartre waited until March 1956 to publish his first article on the War, which was titled "Le colonialisme est un système".

Therefore, can we deduce that Sartre and his review were late in writing about the Algerian War? No, owing to the infringement of freedom of information, people in France were generally slow to react. In the mid-1950s, most daily newspapers – *Le Figaro*, *France-Soir*, *Le Parisien Libéré* – served the State propaganda or were seized – *France-Observateur*, *L'Express* – in order not to alarm public opinion on the War. In fact when it came to Algeria, the word *Guerre* was substituted by euphemisms such as *événements*, *troubles* or *opération de pacification*. Television sets were still a novelty in French households: 125 000 in 1954, 261 000 in 1955

¹⁰² Claude Bourdet, 'Y a-t-il une Gestapo en Algérie?', *L'Observateur*, 6 December 1951.

¹⁰³ François Mauriac, 'Bloc-notes', *L'Express*, 15 January 1955.

¹⁰⁴ *Les Temps modernes* also published an article in November 1955 titled 'L'Algérie n'est pas la France'.

and 442 000 in 1956.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, television news used images provided by the Service Cinématographique des Armées (SCA), which mainly aimed at showing that the situation in Algeria was “under control”.

Why did Sartre specifically publish his article on March 1956? ‘Le colonialisme est un système’ was originally a speech that he made on the 27th January 1956, during a meeting organized by the Comité d’Action des Intellectuels contre la Poursuite de la Guerre en Algérie, salle Wagram in Paris. It might have been triggered by Camus’s ‘Appel pour une Trêve Civile’ in Algiers on 22nd January and the end of Edgar Faure’s government, replaced by Guy Mollet on 24th January. Mollet believed that the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) had to be defeated before any negotiations could be engaged. The Comité d’Action des Intellectuels contre la Poursuite de la Guerre en Algérie had not chosen to grant its support to the FLN or the Mouvement National Algérien (MNA) yet, but it certainly did not agree with Mollet. Sartre’s speech denounced the political and economic mechanisms of colonialism and ended with the following assertion:

La seule chose que nous puissions et devrions tenter, mais c’est aujourd’hui l’essentiel, c’est de lutter aux côtés du peuple algérien pour délivrer à la fois les Algériens et les Français de la tyrannie coloniale.¹⁰⁶

Sartre published his speech a couple of months later, in March 1956, at the point when Algeria finally became an issue widely relayed in the news: on 12th March, Guy Mollet’s socialist government was granted the Special Powers from the Parliament, which means that 250 000 reservists were sent to Algeria and the War intensified. Thousands of families were therefore directly impacted. The army was now free to carry out military ‘justice’ and torture on the supporters of the FLN and the population in general in order to ‘restore order’ in Algeria.¹⁰⁷ Sartre’s speech and article ‘Le colonialisme est un système’ represents a turning point in his political trajectory: the PCF’s vote in favor of the Special Powers triggered his decision to put an end to his four years as a fellow traveler of the Party. The PCF believed they could ignite the

¹⁰⁵ Unesco, *Statistiques de la radiodiffusion et de la télévision 1950-1960*, (1962) <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001359/135951fb.pdf>> [accessed 1 October 2016]

¹⁰⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘Le colonialisme est un système’, *Les Temps Modernes*, 123 (March-April 1956), pp.1371-86.

¹⁰⁷ Vocabulary used in article 5 of the Special Powers Law passed on 12 March 1956 with 455 votes against 76.

proletarian revolution by freeing Algeria from Capitalism and bourgeoisie. Hence, communists continued to interpret the war as a reflection of the polarization of the world and a threat of American imperialism. In their eyes, this vote both dismissed the American threat and secured an opportunity to build a United Front with Guy Mollet and the Socialist Party. The implementation of the Special Powers, the escalation of the war and the sending of French conscripts to Algeria put the PCF in an uncomfortable position as it denounced armed repression. In 1957, Sartre would also publish in his review extracts of *Portrait du colonisé précédé du Portrait du colonisateur* by the Franco-Tunisian writer Albert Memmi. Sartre ended up writing the preface to Memmi's essay that predicted the end of colonialism through revolt.

It is true that, with the intensification of the Algerian War in spring 1956, intellectuals as a group would appear more and more frequently in national newspapers. Their interventions on Algeria are often described by secondary sources as “the war of manifestos”, but with hindsight, mainstream magazines, such as *Paris-Match* created in 1949, probably had more impact on public opinion's awareness of the Algerian War. In August 1956, *Paris-Match*'s editor, Raymond Cartier, had already questioned Mollet's policy in Africa:

Le colonialisme a toujours été une charge en même temps qu'un profit, souvent une charge plus qu'un profit. Dans les conditions et sous les servitudes politiques actuelles, c'est plus vrai que jamais¹⁰⁸

In fact, Cartier gave his name to *Cartiérisme*, the current of thought in the 1950s, which believed that colonies were too expensive. Cartier's famous sentence “La Corrèze avant la Zambèze” aimed at denouncing the excess of development aid in Africa and the delay of modernization of France. There is no doubt that public opinion was more receptive to a glossy magazine and its catchy sentences than to opaque intellectual reviews. While the number of television sets was growing considerably in the 1950s in France, magazine reading was a more affordable and widespread leisure activity. In *Fast cars, Clean Bodies*, Kristin Ross describes the cohesive nature of magazine content and format:

A magazine is flimsier than a book and more durable, more substantial, than a newspaper. The intermediate object status of the magazine – in terms of its

¹⁰⁸ Raymond Cartier, ‘En Afrique noire avec Raymond Cartier. La France sème ses milliards, les Africains disent: c'est bien tard’, *Paris-Match*, 11 August 1956, pp.38-41.

physical properties, price and prose style in the range of print culture makes it more shareable than either the book or the newspaper.¹⁰⁹

She goes on to make a parallel between the practical format of the “weekly” and the length of the working week, transforming the magazine into the best commuting companion. Of all the new magazines that emerged in the 1950s, Ross highlights two particularly influential weeklies: *L’Express* and *Elle*. The first one federated its readers around the project of constructing a modern France¹¹⁰, while the second one brought the case of torture and the Algerian War to its female readers who had been kept away from politics so far in women’s magazines.¹¹¹

Further, a third component probably had a more direct impact on public opinion: the conscripts’ testimony. Those 8 years of war were punctuated by revelations about torture and what gave these revelations authenticity was the power of personal testimony by soldiers and colonised witnesses of the war. Private anger became public protest.¹¹² By underlining what they had seen with their own eyes, these witnesses challenged the official version of the war and probably had more impact on collective memory than a petition signed by intellectuals denouncing the use of torture by the French army and calling for conscientious objectors to be respected. France feared for its conscripts but it did not mean that people wished for a FLN victory. A majority wanted ceasefire negotiations with the FLN, from 58% in January 1958, to 71% in March 1959.¹¹³ Martin Evans explained why the French could not afford to blindly follow the pro-FLN intellectuals:

The patriotic bond between the home front and these raw 20 year olds meant that most French people steered clear of extremism. They did not become involved in overt anti-war opposition, let alone pro-FLN support. They rejected the hard-line position of the pro-French Algeria movement. Instead by 1960 this mainstream majority put their trust in De Gaulle to find an acceptable solution, which would stop the war and bring the conscripts back home.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Kristin Ross, *Fast cars, Clean bodies, Decolonization and the reordering of French culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), p.143.

¹¹⁰ Ross, *Fast cars, Clean bodies*, p.145.

¹¹¹ Ross, *Fast cars, Clean bodies*, p.82: Françoise Sagan’s first editorial in *Elle* dealt with Djamila Boupacha, a tortured FLN prisoner whose case alerted public opinion on the methods used by the French army in Algeria.

¹¹² Martin Evans, *Algeria: France’s Undeclared War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp.210-214.

¹¹³ Evans, *Algeria: France’s Undeclared War*, p.256.

¹¹⁴ Martin Evans, *Algeria: France’s Undeclared War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.282.

Moreover, between January and December 1960, all the French colonies of West and Equatorial Africa and Madagascar achieved their independence, which implied that France was on the path of completing its decolonization process.

The intensification of the war in spring 1956 generated a polarization of intellectuals that was not the typical Right-Left division. *Le Monde* published 'L'Appel pour le salut et le renouveau de l'Algérie française' on 21st April 1956 in favor of French Algeria and most of its signatories did not belong to the Right. The notable signatories include the ethnologist Paul Rivet, the sociologist Albert Bayet and the writer Georges Duhamel. Further, on 23rd May 1956 in the same newspaper, a group of professors from La Sorbonne gave their support to the military effort, some of whom were from the Resistance or Dreyfusards. However, at the end of spring 1956, most petitions of intellectuals were orientated in two directions: negotiation or pacification. In September 1959, with the policy of self-determination, the debate would shift towards two options: A French Algeria or an independent Algeria. One can observe that during the Dreyfus Affair, intellectuals from the Left had gathered around the same universal values of justice and truth, while the Algerian War divided them in the 1950s. Indeed, on one hand, they denounced the military solution and some of its methods. On the other hand, they saw France as the emancipator of Algeria and wanted France to accomplish its "civilising" or "modernising" mission until the end. For example, the ethnologist and member of the Assemblée Nationale Paul Rivet was a man of the Left sent by Guy Mollet to defend his government's position on Algeria at the United Nations and in Latin American countries in September and October 1956. Rivet was in favour of a gradual emancipation of colonised countries and condemned anti-Western sentiment:

Il faut être fier de ce que l'Europe a apporté au monde, de ce que l'homme blanc – oui, l'homme blanc – a fait pour la culture et la civilisation.¹¹⁵

It can be noted that Jacques Soustelle, the Governor General of Algeria in 1955 and 1956, was certainly influenced by Paul Rivet's views on colonised countries as he was taught ethnology by him in 1932 and worked under him at the Musée de L'Homme.

¹¹⁵ Paul Rivet interviewed by Gilles Martinet, 'Dernier entretien avec Paul Rivet', *France Observateur*, 27th March 1958.

Most intellectuals still believed in French universalism and they were not prepared to accept that French culture was not universal. More importantly, intellectuals had just experienced a crisis with the communist episode and were looking to assert their legitimacy as intellectuals. In addition to articles and petitions, some intellectuals formed committees to end violence and discrimination in Algeria, but they were not in favour of independence yet. In November 1955, Robert Antelme, Louis-René des Forêts, Dionys Mascolo and Edgar Morin had created the *Comité d'Action des Intellectuels contre la Poursuite de la Guerre en Afrique du Nord*, which existed until the end of 1956. Its first appeal gathered around seventy signatures, including Mauriac, Sartre, Cocteau, Breton, Bataille, Queneau and Lévi-Strauss. Most signatories were part of the reviews *Les Temps Modernes*, *Esprit*, *Les Lettres Nouvelles* – a literary review created in 1953 by Maurice Nadeau and Maurice Saillet, and *Arguments* – a Marxist philosophical and political review founded in 1956 by Edgar Morin, Roland Barthes, Jean Duvignaud and Colette Audry. The appeal was read by the French writer Dionys Mascolo and asked for the cessation of hostilities and for negotiations between France and Algeria:

Il n'appartient pas aux soussignés, pas plus d'ailleurs qu'aux seuls Français, de proposer des plans de réforme ou des solutions immédiates et complètes. Par contre, ils affirment qu'il est impossible de s'orienter vers un règlement véritable de la question, ni, par suite, vers l'indispensable réconciliation, par d'autres voies que celles d'une négociation libre avec les représentants qualifiés des peuples du Maghreb.¹¹⁶

Not only was the appeal defending the case of Algeria, it was also calling for the end of racial discrimination overseas. Morocco and Tunisia would respectively obtain their independence from France on 2nd and 20th March 1956.

Between 1957 and 1958, several books denounced the use of torture by French paratroopers in Algeria and newspapers and reviews relayed these accounts of torture. In March 1957, the French novelist and literary critic Pierre-Henri Simon, who was not initially in favour of Algerian independence, published *Contre la torture*. This is the first book by a renowned French intellectual against torture in Algeria. He dedicated his book to 'the French people who had resisted Hitler'. Many newspapers reacted to his denunciation; therefore public opinion could not ignore it. In reaction

¹¹⁶ Dionys Mascolo, 'Appel du Comité d'action contre la poursuite de la guerre en Afrique du Nord – 1955', *Lignes*, (33) 1998, 63-67. <DOI 10.3917/lignes0.033.0063>

to this outcry, the French government created on 5th April the “Commission de sauvegarde des droits et des libertés individuels” to investigate these allegations of torture, but the commission did not have any legal power and was more of an initiative taken to reassure public opinion. The following books denouncing torture would be banned. In February 1958, Henri Alleg, the French editor of the communist newspaper *Alger républicain*, published his personal testimony of torture. *La Question* really opened the debate about torture in France, probably because Alleg was not born in Algeria, but in London and grew up in France. On 6th March 1958, Jean-Paul Sartre wrote an article titled ‘Une Victoire’ about Alleg’s victory over his torturers in the weekly *L’Express*, which subsequently became *La Question*’s postface:

[...] en intimidant ses bourreaux, il a fait triompher l'humanisme des victimes et des colonisés contre les violences déréglées de certains militaires, contre le racisme des colons. Et que ce mot de "victimes" n'aille pas évoquer je ne sais quel humanisme larmoyant : au milieu de ces petits caïds, fiers de leur jeunesse, de leur force, de leur nombre, Alleg est le seul dur, le seul qui soit vraiment fort. Nous autres nous pouvons dire qu'il a payé le prix le plus élevé pour le simple droit de rester un homme parmi les hommes.

The magazine was confiscated. Similarly, *Les Temps modernes* had been seized four times in 1957 and was also seized for publishing ‘Une Victoire’. After this censorship, the only thing that was left to the intellectual was to address a petition to the President of France, René Coty. In April 1958, Sartre, and three Nobel Laureates, André Malraux, Roger Martin du Gard and François Mauriac wrote the following letter:

Les soussignés

- protestent contre la saisie de l’ouvrage d’Henri Alleg *La Question*, et contre toutes les saisies et atteintes à la liberté d’opinion et d’expression qui l’ont récemment précédée
- demandent que la lumière soit faite, dans des conditions d’impartialité et de publicité absolue, sur les faits rapportés par Henri Alleg
- somment les pouvoirs publics, au nom de la Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen, de condamner sans équivoque l’usage de la torture, qui déshonore la cause qu’il prétend servir.

It can be noted here that Albert Camus, who was also a Nobel laureate, did not sign the petition. I will discuss Camus’ position during the Algerian War further

in this chapter. Another book denouncing torture would be banned. In June 1959, *La Gangrène*, edited by Jérôme Lindon, gathered 5 testimonies from Algerians who were tortured in metropolitan France, in Parisian prisons. *La Question* and *La Gangrène* were both published by Les Éditions de Minuit. The publishing house played an important role in revealing the atrocities of the Algerian War. Even when *La Gangrène* was seized, Lindon published the minutes of the trial. Had it not been for Lindon, public opinion would not have been informed about these atrocities. This shows that even if some intellectuals actively denounced torture, their intervention was ultimately limited by censorship. The political scientist Martin Harrison listed 586 seizures of newspapers and periodicals in Algeria, and 269 seizures in France during the Algerian war.¹¹⁷ The historian Benjamin Stora explained the use of censorship as a way of keeping away the verbalization of the ideas of war, torture and independence:

“Le sens” de la censure se trouve là: en dissimulant le secret d’une guerre qui s’accomplit, on entretient l’illusion qu’elle pourrait être courte, propre, se terminer autrement que par l’indépendance de l’Algérie.¹¹⁸

Newspapers were seized and prohibited under article 11 of the 3rd April 1955 law declaring the state of emergency. Films were also refused certification, including René Vautier’s *L’Algérie en flammes* (1958) and Jean-Luc Godard’s *Le Petit Soldat* (1960). Much later, Gillo Pontecorvo’s *La Bataille d’Alger* (1966) won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival but it had to wait until 1971 for its broadcast licence in France.

During this period of censorship, the war of the manifestos started in 1960 with the successive publications of the Manifesto of the 121 in September and the Manifesto of French intellectuals in October. The 121 writers, academics and artists signed the petition for the right of insubordination in the Algerian War. The Manifesto was first published abroad but in October, *Les Temps Modernes*, whose printer refused the editing, left two blank pages inside their review and managed to create media hype around the release. During the same month, the Manifesto of French intellectuals gathered more than 300 signatories who denied the supporters of the

¹¹⁷ Martin Harrison, ‘Government and Press in France during the Algerian War’, *The American Political Science Review*, LVIII (1964), 273-295.

¹¹⁸ Benjamin Stora, *La Gangrène et l’Oubli*, (Paris: La Découverte, 1991), p.26.

right of *insoumission* the right to stand as the unique representatives of French intelligentsia. This counter-manifesto was signed mostly by academics from the Right who defended nationalism. A third petition in autumn 1960 proved to be more important than the Manifesto of the 121 in civil society: the appeal to opinion for a negotiated peace in Algeria. There was no more possibility of French Algeria.

What were the intellectuals' positions regarding Algeria at this point? Intellectuals in favour of a French Algeria like Thierry Maulnier, Jules Romain, Roland Dargelès, Michel de Saint-Pierre, Jean Dutourd, Roger Nimier, Pierre Nord still advocated the defence of order, civilization and secularism over Algerian 'fanaticism'. After the battle of Algiers in 1957, the mobilisation of anti-War intellectuals like Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Laurent Schwartz, Francis Jeanson and Henri Curiel would grow stronger. Thus, beyond written denunciation in articles and manifestos from individuals or committees, the Algerian war witnessed the intellectuals' activism in response to censorship and torture that I will examine in a further point in this chapter.

In contrast with the above intellectuals' political interventions, the review *Tel Quel*, which was initially apolitical, was created in 1960 by six young writers in their twenties: Philippe Sollers, Jacques Coudol, Fernand du Boisrouvray, Jean-Edern Hallier, Jean-René Huguenin and Renaud Matignon. What pushed them to reject *engagement* at a time when other intellectuals denounced torture in Algeria and were targeted by censorship? When launching *Les Temps modernes* in 1945, Sartre had presented language as a tool for writers to intervene on all fronts. Conversely, Telquelians did not limit language to its instrumental function and called for the disengagement of literature:

Les idéologues ont suffisamment régné sur l'expression pour que celle-ci se permette enfin de leur fausser compagnie, de ne plus s'occuper que d'elle-même, de sa fatalité et de ses règles particulières.¹¹⁹

They were against the subordination of literature to ideologies and politics. The previous generation of intellectuals had had to confront their historicity in the 1930s and 1940s whereas the new generation, who had grown up during the Occupation,

¹¹⁹ Philippe Sollers, Jean-Edern Hallier, Jean-René Huguenin, 'Déclaration', *Tel Quel*, first issue, 1960.

wanted to give language back its central position. Roland Barthes, who was a fellow Telquelian, explained in an interview in 1961 how the review differed from *La Nouvelle Revue Française* and *Les Temps modernes*:

Je comprends votre projet: vous vous êtes trouvés d'une part devant des revues littéraires, mais dont la littérature était celle de vos aînés, et d'autre part devant des revues polygraphes, de plus en plus indifférentes à la littérature; vous vous êtes sentis insatisfaits, vous avez voulu réagir à la fois contre une certaine littérature et contre un certain mépris de la littérature.¹²⁰

The review intended to refute Sartre's doctrine of *littérature engagée*. In Post-war France, Sartre's review, *Les Temps Modernes*, dominated the other intellectual reviews. Therefore, the only way for a review to stand out was to go against the Sartrean model of *engagement*. Both William Bourton¹²¹ and Richard Wolin¹²² have explained this shift as an Oedipal rebellion against Sartre. *Tel Quel* was in the hands of six intellectuals aged under 25 who, by definition, had to go against the intellectual icons of the previous generation. For them, existentialism was old-fashioned, but in a way they wished for a return to the aestheticism of the pre-Sartre generation whose literary icons were André Gide and Marcel Proust. However, when looking at the review's subtitle over the years, it is clear that it evolved towards a more politicized version, as Gide's *NRF* did: on issue 26 in the summer of 1966, it defined itself as 'Linguistique, psychanalyse, littérature', from issue 29 in spring 1967 it changed to 'Science-littérature', and finally from issues 43 to 94 it became 'Littérature, philosophie, science, politique'. I have explained previously how the vote on Special Powers during the Algerian War had damaged the Socialist and Communist Parties as well the credibility of their fellow intellectuals. In May 68, Telquelians were still close to the PCF, but radicalized their *engagement* in 1971 and turned towards Maoism, before distancing themselves from Marxism and Maoism after their trip to China in 1974.

In fact, *Tel Quel's* essence was more theoretical than political. It emerged from a new theoretical current called structuralism in the mid-1950s that took different shapes. Structuralists analyzed the structures of cultural phenomena. They

¹²⁰ Roland Barthes, 'La littérature, aujourd'hui', *Tel Quel*, n°7, Autumn 1961.

¹²¹ William Bourton, *Entretiens: Sartre, D'un siècle à l'autre*, (Charleroi: Editions Labor, 2004), p.81.

¹²² Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), p.235.

were influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic structuralism that defined language as a system of signs, in his *Cours de linguistique générale* in 1916. Within each unit of signification, he distinguished between the signifier (the sound image) and the signified (the concept). Thus, the signified constituted the arbitrary interpretation of the signifier. Saussure focused on this relation between signified and signifier at any given moment, implying that the language's changes through history were not important. In 1955, Claude Lévi-Strauss applied structuralism to anthropology:

En faisant l'inventaire de toutes les coutumes observées, de toutes celles imaginées dans les mythes, celles aussi évoquées dans les jeux des enfants et des adultes, les rêves des individus sains ou malades et les conduites psycho-pathologiques, on parviendrait à dresser une sorte de tableau périodique comme celui des éléments chimiques, où toutes les coutumes réelles ou simplement possibles apparaîtraient groupées en familles, et où nous n'aurions plus qu'à reconnaître celles que les sociétés ont adoptées.¹²³

Lévi-Strauss was therefore comparing cultural behaviours to chemical elements that could be scientifically analyzed according to a methodological procedure. Following Saussure's linguistic structuralism and Lévi-Strauss's anthropological structuralism, *Tel Quel* would apply the same theory to literature: literary structuralism meant focusing on the text and ignoring its extra-literary justifications. It aimed at defining the theory of literature, as linguistics had defined language. It was about identifying internal rules, patterns and variations, as opposed to analysing the author's style, era, background, state of mind, principles and ideologies.

Between the 1960s and the 1970s, *Tel Quel* evolved from structuralism to post-structuralism. Post-structuralists like Julia Kristeva disagreed with the idea of self-sufficiency of the text. They proposed to take into account the structure of the text but also the network of systems that had helped shaping it. In this context, they introduced the concept of intertextuality, which meant understanding a text through other texts. Philippe Sollers managed to build a network of intellectuals around his review. *Tel Quel* was a platform that both benefited from the reputation of famous intellectuals and gave them the opportunity to exchange thoughts and constitute a literary *avant-garde*, ahead of the outmoded Sartre. From March 1963, its publishing

¹²³ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 2001) (First edition, Paris: Plon, 1955) p.203.

house Le Seuil launched under the same title a collection directed by Sollers. In total, it published 73 books by 32 authors: 34 essays, 29 novels, and 10 collections of poetry.¹²⁴ It can be noted that Le Seuil was publishing at the same time another review already examined in this chapter, *Esprit*, which was a lot more political. Le Seuil was therefore providing reviews for two theoretical currents on the market: existentialism and structuralism. However, Patrick Ffrench and Roland-François Lack have put *Tel Quel*'s success into perspective:

Tel Quel was curiously subject to an inflationary effect whereby its influence was exaggerated in relation to the relatively small number of copies sold.¹²⁵

Tel Quel benefited from a network of names that published articles in the review or published books via the *Tel Quel* collection, but they were not part of the committee per se. This raises the question of dissemination and impact of the intellectual's work: were Gide, Sartre and Sollers recognized for their personal written work or for the aura of their respective reviews? They may have directed their reviews, but they were part of collective enterprises. A strong intellectual capital gravitated around their reviews, which means that *La NRF* and *Les Temps modernes* have survived Gide and Sartre, while Sollers created a new review in 1983, called *L'Infini*. Gallimard publishes all three reviews today.

May 68 proved that man was still free to make history and allowed Sartre to make his intellectual and political come back, even if he hadn't developed his existentialist theory after the mid-1940s. Still, Existentialism's openness to individual freedom was still appealing, as opposed to the yoke of orthodox Marxism and its objectivism. Cultural modernization and the political traditionalism embodied by de Gaulle could not coexist anymore. Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron described in *Les Héritiers* students' need to identify with a theoretical paradigm that valued them both as a group and as individuals:

Les étudiants ont au moins en commun la volonté de réaliser aussi bien le mythe de l'unité que dans le jeu de la diversification, l'identification individuelle

¹²⁴ Philippe Forest, 'La double collection: Philippe Sollers, *Tel Quel*, *L'Infini*', *Fabula*, <http://www.fabula.org/atelier.php?Tel_quel%2C_L%27Infini%3A_la_double_collection> [accessed 12th June 2017]

¹²⁵ Patrick Ffrench, Roland-François Lack, *The Tel Quel Reader*, (Hove: Psychology Press, 1998), p.244.

à quelque chose qui, sans être un modèle, est moins qu'un idéal et plus qu'un stéréotype, et qui définit une essence historique de l'étudiant.¹²⁶

Therefore in 1964 Bourdieu and Passeron had already identified one of the sources of the May 68 revolt : the students' aspiration to self-determination, regardless of their social origins. Unlike their parents, they refused to join the established political parties out of fear of losing their individuality. In this context, it is understandable that some students opted for political radicalism through Maoism while others simply rejected politics as a whole.

Taking a closer look at four different French intellectual reviews during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, one realizes that they did not share the same view on Maoism. With hindsight, these reviews reveal the intellectuals' detachment from Soviet Marxism and Maoism.

La Cause du Peuple, a newspaper created by Roland Castro and La Gauche Prolétarienne (GP) in November 1968, defined itself as a “*journal communiste révolutionnaire prolétarien*”. They shared Mao Zedong's idea of Mass line, the close collaboration between executives of the Party and the peasantry becoming the engine of the revolutionary movement. Sartre would often open his review, *Les Temps Modernes*, to *La Cause du Peuple*'s Maoists and would even become its editor from May 1970 to May 1971. Conversely, Jean-Marie Domenach's *Esprit* showed more reluctance regarding the fascination towards China in France. Praising China also meant criticizing the Russian political system. He also did not trust the sources of the information provided by the French press. Moreover, while defending the May 68 revolt, *Esprit* condemned its excess and use of violence. As for the Chinese Cultural Revolution that French intellectuals celebrated, *Esprit* would be among the first reviews to denounce the terrible situation of Chinese intellectuals. By contrast, *Les Temps Modernes* justified the use of violence by the masses:

La violence des masses elles-mêmes, dans leurs luttes, est toujours légitime. Elle est l'expression de la radicalité des contradictions en présence, elle témoigne du niveau de conscience collectif de la volonté de résistance à l'oppression, elle est école de la Révolution, de la lutte pour le pouvoir.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-Claude Passeron, *Les Héritiers*, (Paris : Editions de Minuit, 1964), p.58.

¹²⁷ Tiennot Grumbach, 'En cherchant l'unité', *Les Temps modernes*, 307 (1972), p.1226.

In July 1972, *Les Temps Modernes* even published a special issue dedicated to *La Cause du Peuple's* Maoists, but Mao Zedong's China was usually not mentioned by this review. This lack of interest in China may be explained by the fact that Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir had already been to China in 1955 and were now focusing their attention on national struggles or countries of the Third World that received less media coverage. *Tel Quel* could not have been more different from *Les Temps Modernes* in its relationship with the Maoists. In fact, until 1971, *Tel Quel's* relationship with the Maoists was non-existent, as they remained faithful to the PCF. They would however write articles on China and political travellers. Within *Tel Quel's* committee, two camps emerged as a result of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: Philippe Sollers was in favor of rallying Maoism immediately, whereas Marcelin Pleynet advocated a dialogue with the PCF. Strategically, *Tel Quel's* literary avant-garde chose to maintain the dialogue with the PCF, until 1972 when they would turn to Maoism. In the end, like Sartre and Beauvoir almost twenty years before, a *Tel Quel* delegation, composed of Philippe Sollers, Julia Kristeva, Marcelin Pleynet, Roland Barthes and François Wahl, embarked on a journey to China between 11th April and 4th May 1974. They had been invited by the Chinese Embassy on the initiative of Maria-Antonietta Macciocchi, the author of *Daily Life in revolutionary China*. The organized tour included cultural sites, factory visits and meetings with academics and writers. On their return, they published various articles on their trip in *Tel Quel* and *Le Monde* and Barthes gave a seminar on China to his students, but with Mao's death in 1976 and the confirmation of repression in China, *Tel Quel* eventually distanced itself from Maoism. With the benefit of hindsight, Philippe Sollers explained that he had been seduced by the Marxist illusion in Maoism:

C'est en 1966, précisément à cause de la révolution culturelle, que je me suis intéressé au marxisme. Je ne m'y serais peut-être pas intéressé autrement. Mao, en effet, à l'époque, semblait réinventer l'horizon, clos par Staline, de la révolution. Et la conjonction, pour moi, entre la culture chinoise que j'ai toujours sensuellement et intellectuellement aimée et la promesse d'un dépassement du cancer stalinien par une autre conception, ouverte et inventive, retrouvant l'intelligence pratique de l'action révolutionnaire, cette conjonction, donc, suscitait en moi les plus grands espoirs: peut-être allait-on voir enfin une révolution qui dépasserait la révolution devenue contre-révolution en URSS [...] A mon avis, Mao a prolongé, pour nous, la vie de ce qu'il faut bien appeler, aujourd'hui, l'illusion marxiste, et cela pendant les dix dernières années. [...]

Mao a échoué, comme Marx, comme Lénine, comme la Commune de Paris, comme Mai 68.¹²⁸

In the end, the two reviews that had supported the Chinese Cultural Revolution, *La Cause du Peuple* and *Tel Quel*, ceased to exist respectively in 1978 and 1982. From the abandonment of Marxism would emerge “la Nouvelle Philosophie” in June 1976. *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* put Bernard-Henri Lévy in charge of their special weekly issue, which he decided to title “*les Nouveaux Philosophes*”. Although they were never really recognized as a distinctive school of thought, the dozen of self-proclaimed “new philosophers” created an illusion of philosophical renewal by regularly appearing on television and in magazines between 1976 and 1978. As former Leftist activists who had taken part in May 68, most of them benefited from a certain moral authority – Lévy did not take part in May 68 though¹²⁹. They all had in common the condemnation of authoritarianism. In fact, apart from rejecting Marxism, they did not create any new concepts.

Bernard-Henri Lévy created his own review, *La Règle du jeu*, in 1990, with the subtitle “Littérature, Philosophie, Politique, Arts”. Among its editorial board were other writers such as Susan Sontage, Salman Rushdie and Jorge Semprun. It still publishes three issues per year. It launched several campaigns, such as the petition to save Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, an Iranian woman who was convicted of adultery but who was freed in 2014 after nine years of imprisonment. Its particularity is that it has its own website laregledujeu.org, on which articles and videos are free and contributors comment on current affairs. It also organises its own weekly seminars in a cinema in St-Germain-des-Prés. Therefore, its target audience is larger than Lévy’s readership and probably younger too, owing to its online and free content.

But the three dominant intellectual reviews since the 1980s have been *Le Débat* founded by Pierre Nora, *Esprit* by Emmanuel Mounier and *Commentaire* by Raymond Aron. How can these reviews survive mass media and the dilution of information? *Commentaire*’s director, Jean-Claude Casanova, believes that there is specifically a market for intellectual reviews in France:

¹²⁸ Philippe Sollers, *Délivrance*, (Paris : Editions du Seuil, 1977), pp.132-33.

¹²⁹ See interview with BHL in the appendix for an explanation on his absence during May 68.

[...] qu'est-ce qui distingue une revue ? La presse ne peut pas fournir ce que nous proposons. La page du *Monde*, c'est environ 10 000 signes, or nous proposons des articles plus longs, entre 25 000 et 50 000 signes. D'autre part, on ne trouve pas en France, de magazines à haut niveau intellectuel comme ceux qui existent depuis longtemps dans le monde anglo-américain, style la *New York Review of Books*, *New Republic*, *The Atlantic Monthly* aux États-Unis, ou *Spectator* en Angleterre, ou le *TLS* [*Times Literary Supplement*]. Cela n'existe pas en France. En France, la presse telle qu'elle est ne peut pas satisfaire un certain type de réflexion, de littérature intellectuelle.¹³⁰

In my interview with Edgar Morin, I asked if he managed to express his thoughts in depth in nowadays newspapers that, as described by Casanova above, limit their contributors to a certain number of words. Morin explained that his previous extensive work in philosophy and sociology legitimised his shorter interventions in newspapers today:

Il est évident que dans le temps, je pouvais faire des articles qui passaient en trois fois, c'est-à-dire en trois numéros successifs. J'avais le temps et la place de développer ma pensée. Il est évident qu'aujourd'hui la pression est de plus en plus grande, on est contraints à tant de signes, on est très limités. Cela a parfois quelques inconvénients, mais enfin jusqu'à présent je me suis exprimé sur des questions qui ont été aussi bien des questions de guerre comme le Moyen-Orient, la guerre d'Irak, le problème palestinien, etc. ou des questions françaises. Si vous voulez, je peux m'exprimer sur l'évènement, sur ce qui nous arrive, en vertu de tout le travail que j'ai pu faire par ailleurs dans mes livres.

Judging from Casanova's comment, it seems French intellectual reviews are here to stay, even if they are read by a small segment of the population. They fill a gap in the market. What distinguishes these three reviews? *Le Débat*'s is a monthly review that deals mainly with French intellectuals and academics. *Commentaire* is a quarterly review that is more international and political than the other two. *Esprit* is a monthly review that deals with a wider variety of topics. However, they have no ideological differences and are all committed reviews. In fact, they share the same readership and certain contributors too. According to Casanova, their readership is made up of 20% of students (student in Law, from Science Po, and in Economics),

¹³⁰ Jean-Claude Casanova, 'Entretien avec Jean-Claude Casanova: Commentaire dans le paysage intellectuel', 10th April 2008, < <https://www.nonfiction.fr/article-926-entretien-avec-jean-claude-casanova-6-commentaire-dans-le-paysage-intellectuel.htm> > [accessed 9th September 2017]

the rest are executives and academics. They are also read abroad, in Belgium, Switzerland and Italy where the elite can read French, in American university libraries and by French expatriates. In terms of dissemination and impact, today's intellectual reviews have not made much progress compared to their predecessors. They still address the same elitist bubble. Lévy's *La Règle du jeu* democratized its access thanks to its website, but the review and its website are actually two different entities that offer different contents: the review is made up of about 250 pages, while the website, on top of offering the same articles, provides more regular and shorter articles on current affairs and publishes interviews from other media such as radio stations. There is no doubt that they address different publics. The price of these intellectual reviews also needs to be taken into consideration when evaluating their impact on the masses. *La Règle du jeu* or *Esprit* cost €20 per issue, while *Commentaire* costs €23 per issue. As for *Le Débat*, readers can buy PDF versions of individual articles for €3.49. At a time when information is mostly free and mainstream national newspapers offer subscriptions for under €10 per month, buying any of these reviews would be a commitment for the ordinary reader. For these prices, it also implies that the reader would be buying reviews to keep them or collect them, but intellectuals and their reviews do not necessarily have this kind of loyal public. As Sartre lamented in 1948 in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, "[...] nous avons des lecteurs, mais pas de public",¹³¹ which is still true today. Therefore, intellectuals – and publishing houses – have made the choice to keep publishing their reviews that appeal to a small segment of the market, while intervening in national newspapers, in occasional articles or weekly "bloc-notes", to reach the masses. Intellectual reviews do not have the same prestige as they used to have, but they allow intellectuals to be what they are: neither journalists nor experts. Moreover, intervening in national newspapers does not necessarily make the intellectual more accessible. When I interviewed Jean-Pierre Barou, he expressed certain disgust towards the concentration of powers among French media and intelligentsia:

Le positionnement intellectuel est tellement lié aux médias, tellement lié à la presse. Il y a des intellectuels français qui existent parce que le journal *Le Monde* les fait exister. Au niveau des lectures réelles, ils ne sont pas si présents que ça, mais ils ont maintenant une histoire, des habitudes, des

¹³¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1948) p.319.

connivences, ce sont les mêmes qui s'adressent aux mêmes. *Le Monde* entretient un groupuscule d'intellectuels qui semblent engagés, mais au niveau de la jeunesse et de l'Europe, je n'en suis pas très sûr.

In this interview, Barou was making the distinction between self-declared intellectuals such as Bernard-Henri Lévy and intellectuals who trigger social change and *engagement* among the masses, like Stéphane Hessel. This brings us back to the ideas of authenticity and legitimacy of the intellectual. As explained by Morin above, if the intellectual's previous work has been recognized as valuable to society, public opinion is more likely to welcome his or her intervention in mainstream media.

Politics: The short-lived RDR and *les intellectuels de gouvernement*

Sartre's brief political intervention as a member of the *Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire* (RDR), at a time when he was at the peak of his literary career, can be explained by several socio-historical factors. 1947 witnessed the outbreak of the Cold War, the reconstitution of the Right within the *Rassemblement du peuple français* (RPF), the eviction of the PCF from the government, and the amplification of strikes. In 1948, the Cold War – and the fear of a European War – intensified, which triggered among several intellectuals and journalists the urge for political radicalization. The RDR was founded by activists from the SFIO, Léon Boutbien and Jean Rous, journalists from *Franc-Tireur*, David Rousset and Georges Altman, and intellectuals such as Jean-Paul Sartre, and Paul Fraisse from *Esprit*. The non-aligned and anti-imperialist movement was never a political party, but rather an assembly that members of parties could join. On 27th February 1948, *Franc-tireur* published the first appeal of the RDR to find a third way between the USA and the USSR:

Entre les pourrissements de la démocratie capitaliste, les faiblesses et les tares d'une certaine social-démocratie et la limitation du communisme à sa forme stalinienne, nous pensons qu'un rassemblement d'hommes libres pour la démocratie révolutionnaire est capable de faire prendre une vie nouvelle aux principes de liberté, de dignité humaine en les liant à la lutte pour la révolution sociale.¹³²

¹³² First appeal of the RDR, 'Nous sommes des millions qui cherchons le même chemin', *Franc-tireur*, 27th February 1948.

The movement gained legitimacy through intellectuals such as Albert Camus, Simone de Beauvoir, Claude Bourdet and André Breton who offered their support during several rallies organized by the RDR, such as “L’internationalisme de l’Esprit et la paix dans le monde” on 13th December 1948. The RDR also organized local committee meetings and published its own newspaper, *La Gauche*, between May 1948 and March 1949. Despite Sartre’s fame and success with existentialism, Rousset was the true leader of the RDR and its best orator,¹³³ and there were strong differences between the two men, as explained by Sartre in *La Cérémonie des adieux*:

[...] les mesures que prenait le RDR étaient beaucoup plus réformistes que révolutionnaires; en particulier parce que Rousset, ancien trotskiste, n’avait rien d’un révolutionnaire, sinon la grande gueule. Et, en ce qui me concerne, j’avais été plutôt attiré dans le RDR que je n’y étais entré personnellement et résolument. Une fois que j’y étais, on a voulu m’y faire une place importante, je m’y prêtais; mais nous étions en opposition assez grande, Rousset et moi.¹³⁴

As a result of these differences of opinion, the movement never turned into a political party and dissolved after a year. Sartre resented the fact that Rousset had collected money in the USA from several labour unions and felt that it would undermine the movement’s autonomy. On 30th April 1949, the RDR took part in “La Journée Internationale de la Résistance à la Dictature et à la Guerre”, which Sartre did not attend as he feared the event would become anti-communist. As described by Michel-Antoine Burnier in *Les Existentialistes et la politique*, the event turned out to be indeed pro-American and one speaker even praised the American atomic bomb, presenting it as a factor of peace.¹³⁵ Sartre officially left the movement on 15th October 1949. Sartre claimed that he then reluctantly picked the side of Russia because the U.S. were the most likely to lead the world into a new war. The Ridgway Affair – from the name of the American General who was accused by the Communists of using bacteriological arms in Korea and China – finally turned him into a fellow traveller between 1952 and 1956: ‘I didn’t like it, but to be active

¹³³ Ian H. Birchall, *Sartre against Stalinism*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), p.105.

¹³⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, in Simone de Beauvoir, *La Cérémonie des adieux*, (Paris: Gallimard: 1981) p.460.

¹³⁵ Michel-Antoine Burnier, *Les Existentialistes et la politique*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp.72-73.

politically means to live schizophrenically.’¹³⁶ Sartre implied here that he was not entirely sold on the communist cause and remained intellectually independent. His admiration for the Soviet Union materialized in 1952 with a series of articles in *Les Temps Modernes*, titled “Les Communistes et La Paix”.¹³⁷ Simone de Beauvoir explained how this *compagnonnage* in the early 1950s would later discredit Sartre who cut his links with the Communists following the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. By becoming a fellow traveller, he had hoped that he could get closer to the masses but he was politically isolated and challenged. This period of uncertainty on the political and ideological chessboard can justify the low number of interviews granted by Sartre at the time, as highlighted by Jean-Pierre Boulé in his book *Sartre médiatique*:

Une courbe des interviews de Sartre de 1939 à 1980 accuse le plus grand creux de 1956 à 1958. En 1956 et en 1957, Sartre n'accorda que deux interviews. En 1958, selon *Les Ecrits de Sartre*, il n'accorda aucune interview [...]¹³⁸

These figures don't indicate whether Sartre avoided journalists at the time or whether journalists did not consider his political viewpoint as relevant anymore. Sartre may not have appeared in interviews, but he would use the Algerian War to make a political come back.

During the Algerian War, other intellectuals would get involved in politics after Sartre, but rather as mediators between the government and the people or as part of the government. With the Battle of Algiers that lasted from September 1956 to October 1957 and the revelations about torture, intellectuals were looking to ease tensions and maintain a dialogue between communities. The Battle of Algiers opposed the FLN and the French army and constituted a pivotal moment in this War. Urban terrorism, the granting of special repressive powers to the army and the recall of reservists intensified the conflict. The repression, torture and “disappearance” of prisoners strengthened the support for the FLN and finally triggered intellectual *engagement* in favour of an independent Algeria.

¹³⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, in John Gerassi, *Talking with Sartre – Conversations and Debates*, interviewed by John Gerassi between 1970 and 1974, (Yale University Press, 2009), p.108.

¹³⁷ Jean-François Sirinelli, *Intellectuels et passions françaises, Manifestes et pétitions au vingtième siècle*, (Paris : Fayard, 1990), p.169.

¹³⁸ Jean-Pierre Boulé, *Sartre médiatique*, (Paris, Minard, 1992), p.50.

The Battle of Algiers started on 30th September 1956 as three female FLN activists recruited by Saadi Yacef, the FLN military chief of Algiers, planted three bombs in European Algiers targeting civilians. The bombings triggered a series of reprisals called *ratonnades* and the violence escalated on both sides. On the 7th January 1957, the French Army was deployed and general Massu received civilian and military 'Special Powers'. His troops carried out a *quadrillage* of the city, which consisted in combing defined areas for FLN members and sympathizers. They also resorted to torture to interrogate their prisoners. They regained control of the city and Yacef was captured on 24th September 1957.

During this battle and after the revelations on torture carried out by the French army, certain intellectuals acted as mediators between the French State and Algerian Muslims. The French sociologist and ethnographer Germaine Tillion believed in Franco-Muslim reconciliation. Between November 1954 and February 1955, she had been charged by the French government to observe and report on the situation of the population in Algeria. She had described a phenomenon that she called *clochardisation*: she witnessed a rural exodus and the development of slums around big cities. As a result, she created an administrative and educational network in Algeria called the *Centres Sociaux* in October 1955 to provide education, reduce illiteracy and keep the dialogue open between communities in Algeria. The objective was to build 705 centres by 1966 to help students in Algeria integrate the French education system. In his 2001 book *Uncivil War*, James D. Le Sueur has contrasted Aron and Tillion's views on Algeria: while Aron advocated disengagement to stop France's economic losses, Tillion was more concerned with the effect of the War on Algerians, which she highlighted in *L'Algérie en 1957*, and therefore she advocated cooperation and modernisation.¹³⁹ However, the *Centres sociaux* were soon caught in the crossfire: were they working in the interest of the French or were they under the yoke of the nationalist rebellion? Tillion encouraged the development of the *Centres Sociaux* until she realised torture and violence prevented any negotiation towards peace. She continued to denounce the use of torture by French forces, attempted a deal with Saadi Yacef to stop the FLN bombing attacks and the French

¹³⁹ James D Le Sueur, *Uncivil War, Intellectuals and Identity Politics during the Decolonization of Ageria*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), p.148.

army's capital executions and testified in favour of Yacef during his trial in Algiers in July 1958.

Like Germaine Tillion, another intellectual believed in French universalism and worked for the French State in Algeria: Stéphane Hessel. Chapter five will explain how he worked in development assistance in Africa, in particular in Algeria. Although he was in favor of the decolonisation of Algeria, Hessel believed in the emancipation of Algeria through its education system and the modernisation of the country through a bilingual youth.

I have explained earlier in the previous section of this chapter how several intellectuals had created in November 1955 the Comité d'Action des Intellectuels contre la Poursuite de la Guerre en Afrique du Nord, which existed until the end of 1956, and had launched an appeal for the cessation of hostilities and for negotiations between France and Algeria. Two days after the appeal, during a press conference, Soustelle, who was one of the most controversial of the French intellectuals as he remained pro-*Algérie française* and was nominated Governor General of Algeria by Pierre Mendès-France in 1955-56, questioned the audacity of the Committee to speak for the Algerian nationalists and address public opinion as intellectuals. He even published a letter in *Combat* on 26th November 1955 titled 'A letter of an intellectual to some others', in which he claimed the intellectuals' support to anticolonialism compromised their impartiality. Soustelle refused to use the term "war" to describe the events in Algeria, as, according to him, Algeria was France, and France could not be at war with itself. In an analogy between Algerian nationalism and Nazism, he attempted to revive French patriotism:

Pour ce qui me concerne, je suis de ceux qui se sont dressés entre 1936 et 1940 contre le péril des dictatures de l'extérieur et de l'intérieur, contre le racisme et l'intolérance: je n'ai pas changé. J'ai lutté contre l'esprit de défaite et d'abandon qui a conduit la France à livrer la Tchécoslovaquie, à permettre la remilitarisation de la Rhénanie par Hitler, à laisser l'axe se créer et se durcir face au désarmement des démocraties: je n'ai pas changé. De 1940 à 1944, j'ai été de ceux qui ont obstinément et malgré tout refusé la capitulation: et je n'ai pas changé. Si maintenant on somme la France, au nom d'un totalitarisme médiéval, de renoncer non seulement à l'Algérie mais en fait à elle-même, je ne serai pas complice.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Jacques Soustelle, 'Lettre d'un intellectuel à quelques autres à propos de l'Algérie', *Combat*, 26-27 November 1955.

Soustelle's failure to remain independent from the State was perceived by anti-colonialist intellectuals as incompatible with his status of intellectual. Hence, who was the rightful heir of the thinkers of the Enlightenment: the State's intellectual who was 'protecting' French universalism and power overseas from defeatism and decline; or the underground anti-colonialist activist who was arming the nationalists? In the end, both were encouraging violence against their own people. However, some intellectuals remained torn between the necessity to denounce torture and their allegiance to the government.

Malraux is another intellectual who got involved in politics, but his viewpoints on torture during the Algerian War turned out to be self-contradicting. When Charles de Gaulle was brought back to power, he appointed Malraux as Minister of Information on the 1st June 1958. Malraux had already been appointed for this same role from November 1945 and January 1946 in de Gaulle's Provisional Government and would be a strong ally of de Gaulle in the Rassemblement du Peuple Français (RPF). As explained earlier in this chapter, Malraux, as a writer, had protested against the use of torture in Algeria in a letter to the President René Coty, co-signed by Jean-Paul Sartre, Roger Martin du Gard and François Mauriac in April 1958:

Les soussignés: [...] somment les pouvoirs publics, au nom de la Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen, de condamner sans équivoque l'usage de la torture, qui déshonore la cause qu'il prétend servir¹⁴¹

However, during a press conference on the 24th June 1958, Malraux admitted the use of torture by the French army in Algeria after de Gaulle's visit to Algiers on 4th June 1958:

Aucun acte de torture ne s'est produit ni à ma connaissance, ni à la vôtre, depuis la venue à Alger du Général de Gaulle. Il ne doit plus s'en produire désormais. Au nom du gouvernement, j'invite ici les trois écrivains français auxquels le prix Nobel a donné une autorité particulière et qui ont déjà étudié ces problèmes à former une commission qui partira pour l'Algérie. Je suis en mesure de les assurer qu'ils seront accrédités auprès de tous par le Général de Gaulle.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ André Malraux, Roger Martin du Gard, François Mauriac and Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Adresse solennelle au Président de la République', *Le Monde*, 17 April 1958.

¹⁴² André Malraux, Press conference on 24 June 1958, published in *Le Figaro* on 25 June 1958.

The three French literature Nobel laureates, Martin du Gard, Camus and Mauriac, never followed up on Malraux's offer, but this declaration must have been embarrassing for de Gaulle. Even if the Fifth Republic had officially moved away from torture, it certainly continued after his visit to Algiers. De Gaulle then appointed Malraux as France's first Minister of Cultural Affairs on 8th January 1959 and replaced him by Jacques Soustelle. With this new appointment, Malraux lost the role of Government spokesman and therefore was less exposed to diplomatic faux pas. Malraux's unwavering endorsement of de Gaulle's policy in Algeria appeared even more naive or dishonest when other accounts of torture emerged despite censorship soon after his declaration: in June 1959, *La Gangrène* proved that torture was carried out on Algerians in metropolitan France in December 1958 – Malraux then claimed that these accusations had been invented by the Communist Party. Therefore, the discrepancies in his declarations as a novelist and then as a minister in de Gaulle's government raise doubts on the critical sense of intellectuals while serving the State and their compatibility with politics.

When looking at these different degrees of political interventions by intellectuals, the results are disappointing. The RDR failed to become a political party and therefore did not achieve much on the political stage. It was definitely a collective enterprise but it did not withstand its internal tensions. It also highlighted the importance of being a good orator, which is not the first quality intellectuals are known for, although I will explain in Chapter five that Stéphane Hessel was a good orator, rather than a writer. When intellectuals like Tillion and Hessel intervened as mediators between the government and communities, they also faced a trust problem. By definition, being a mediator meant they were not fully on board with the government's policies and therefore raised suspicion. Finally, Malraux's and Soustelle's support for the government questioned their independence of thought in the eyes of the masses, especially when, in Malraux's case, clear contradictions emerged between his positions on torture as a writer and as a politician. The role of politician demanded consistency of thought, firm oral statements and full commitment to a government, whereas the status of intellectual implied a constant evolution of thought, a certain detachment at times to ponder on current affairs, and primarily the production of written work.

The radicalization of *engagement*: clandestine activity and advocacy of violence

During the Algerian War, certain intellectuals resorted to a radical form of intervention : clandestine activity. Benjamin Stora explained how, among the networks helping the FLN, the circulation of censored books *sous le manteau* became an act of moral protest.¹⁴³ For the French journalist Francis Jeanson, a way of supporting the Algerian nationalists' cause consisted in his underground network of French and Algerian members, "les porteurs de valise", who mainly carried money and papers for the FLN. He aimed at showing the French public that both action and reflection could help the Algerians. The trial of 23 members of the Network in September 1960 would raise the question of the limits of intellectual *engagement*. Moreover, if the intellectual was public by definition, why was Jeanson part of this underground anti-war movement? He had been one of the first intellectuals to denounce torture and colonial war in general and to side with the FLN in 1955 in his book *L'Algérie hors-la-loi*. During a clandestine press conference in Paris, he justified his switch to clandestine activity:

Il fallait que fussent mis en œuvre les préceptes de cette gauche devenue platonique; en particulier sur la solidarité avec les peuples coloniaux. Il fallait que demain, une fois acquise l'indépendance de l'Algérie, des liens fussent encore possibles entre elle et la France.¹⁴⁴

Jeanson was re-defining the intellectual's role right there: the intellectual was not *au-dessus de la mêlée*, or denouncing an injustice anymore; the intellectual was the action. He was substituting the Left government and making decisions in its place. He also was the key element of an army as he was raising money to arm the FLN and even explained his action to French public opinion in 1960 in his pamphlet *Notre guerre* published by Les Editions de Minuit.

Like Jeanson, Sartre was against torture, but he advocated violence as a solution to the conflict and rallied to the FLN's cause. He justified the violence of the colonized towards the colonizer in the Preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* on 1961. In fact, he went even further than the author himself:

¹⁴³ Benjamin Stora, *La Gangrène et l'Oubli*, (Paris: La Découverte, 1991), p.69.

¹⁴⁴ Francis Jeanson, during a clandestine press conference in Paris, in Georges Arnaud, 'Les étranges confidences du professeur Jeanson', *Paris-Presse – L'Intransigeant*, 20 April 1960.

Abattre un Européen, c'est faire d'une pierre deux coups, supprimer en même temps un oppresseur et un opprimé: restent un homme mort et un homme libre; le survivant, pour la première fois, sent un sol national sous la plante de ses pieds.¹⁴⁵

Further, contrary to Sartre's dream of a proletarian revolution, Fanon believed in the revolt of the peasants, not the proletariat: 'Dans leur spontanéité, les masses rurales demeurent disciplinées et altruistes. L'individu s'efface devant la communauté.'¹⁴⁶ Fanon believed the proletariat had already started taking advantage of the colonial situation and had personal interests in the French presence; whereas *la paysannerie* was instinctively rebel. As a result, Sartre's preface to Fanon's book does not completely corroborate the author's message.

In setting up a clandestine network and encouraging violence against the colonizer, Jeanson and Sartre respectively took extreme positions that were based not only on the universal values of reason and morality, but on nationalism and social class. And yet, they kept their status of intellectuals after the war, even though they were not guardians of the universal anymore.

Non-participation – the *uncommitted* intellectual

In parallel with the radicalization of some intellectuals' interventions, one of the most misunderstood positions on the Algerian War remains Albert Camus's non-participation in the debate. The Algerian-born author had worked hard during the first year of the French-Algerian war to put an end to terrorism and French repression, and to advocate federalism. However, he warned Algerians that if they did not stop terrorism, French liberals like him could no longer support them. In a letter to the Algerian militant Mohamed el Aziz Kessous who had launched the journal *Communauté algérienne*, this is what he wrote in October 1955 to stop the escalation of violence:

Oui, l'essentiel est de maintenir, si restreinte soit-elle, la place du dialogue encore possible; l'essentiel est de ramener si légère, si fugitive qu'elle soit, la détente. Et pour cela, il faut que chacun de nous prêche l'apaisement aux siens. Les massacres inexcusables des civils français entraînent d'autres destructions aussi stupides opérées sur la personne et les biens du peuple arabe. On dirait que des fous, enflammés de fureur, conscients du mariage

¹⁴⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, Preface to Fanon's *Les Damnés de la Terre*, (Paris: Maspero, 1961), p.29.

¹⁴⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la Terre*, (Paris: Maspero, 1961), p.46.

forcé dont ils ne peuvent se délivrer, ont décidé d'en faire une étreinte mortelle.¹⁴⁷

As explained by Ron Aronson, violence was central to Sartre's and Camus's outlook: Sartre was more interested in its function of empowerment among the victims of oppression who chose to practice it¹⁴⁸, whereas Camus rejected it on both sides and was an unapologetic idealist who believed in proposing alternatives, such as a civilian truce¹⁴⁹ and world citizenship.¹⁵⁰ With other liberals, he formed the *Comité pour une Trêve Civile en Algérie* in January 1956 and wrote a letter to Prime Minister Guy Mollet to urge him to denounce French abuses. Paradoxically, he distinguished the positive attributes of French colonialism in Algeria from the Soviet's oppression in Eastern Europe. However, since the Special Powers Act had been voted, the French government was now free to resort to capital punishment in Algeria against convicts. Camus confirmed his decision not to get involved in the fight for the independence of Algeria on 12th December 1957, during a conference in Stockholm, two days after receiving the Nobel Prize in literature:

J'ai toujours condamné la terreur. Je dois condamner aussi un terrorisme qui s'exerce aveuglément, dans les rues d'Alger par exemple, et qui un jour peut frapper ma mère ou ma famille. Je crois à la justice, mais je défendrai ma mère avant la justice.¹⁵¹

Tony Judt and James Le Sueur disagree on the interpretation of Camus's unpublic status. Judt defines Camus as an "unpolitical man", whereas Le Sueur prefers to use the term "unaffiliated":

Camus's position on France's right to remain in Algeria can hardly be called nonpolitical in the broader sense of the word. Indeed, it is this unhealthy

¹⁴⁷ Albert Camus, *Lettre à un militant algérien*, (1955) (Paris: La Pléiade, 1972), p.963

¹⁴⁸ Ron Aronson, *Sartre and Camus: the story of a friendship and the quarrel that ended it*, (University of Chicago, 2004), p.34.

¹⁴⁹ Ron Aronson, *Sartre and Camus: the story of a friendship and the quarrel that ended it*, (University of Chicago, 2004), p.108.

¹⁵⁰ This is a common point with Edgar Morin who also mentioned the ideas of "conscience de Terre-patrie" and "gouvernance mondiale" when I interviewed him.

¹⁵¹ Albert Camus quoted in Olivier Todd, *Albert Camus. Une vie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), p.700.

combination of the dual meanings of “nonpolitical” that makes the question of Camus so provocative.¹⁵²

By mentioning his mother, Camus arguably flagged the ‘nonpolitical’ nature of his stance and his detractors regarded this as his approval of the French presence in Algeria. However, this should rather be interpreted as Camus’ s refusal to adhere to terrorist violence and conform to political doctrines and parties. In this context of ‘pacification’, he believed that civilian lives were more important than justice. In fact, Camus did not believe in an absolute justice, a point he made clear in his most political book, *L’Homme révolté*, in 1951. Defining Camus as uncommitted is therefore simplistic, he was after all committed to non-violence.

After the Algerian War, May 68 would be another divisive event among intelligentsia. It would be wrong to assume that all intellectuals identified with May 68. Already towards the end of the Algerian War, some intellectuals had refused to comment on decolonisation. For example, the *Arguments* group and review founded in December 1956 by Edgar Morin, Roland Barthes, Jean Duvignaud and Colette Audry openly described themselves to be revisionists of Soviet orthodoxy. They rejected Sartre’s claim in *Qu’est-ce que la littérature?* that the intellectual is by definition “committed”. They wanted to be seen as “uncommitted”. These intellectuals had broken with the PCF and distanced themselves from partisan debates, but they still discussed political and social issues. Among the topics of their review were the working class, capitalism, communism, art, language, poetry, etc. In fact, they were revisionists of Marxism: they refused to be pigeonholed in a party or a system of norms, but that did not prevent them from joining committees or signing petitions to defend their respective causes.

A clear hostility to the revolt came out of the conservative and pro-liberal Right. André Malraux, who was Minister of Culture in De Gaulle’s government from 1959 to 1969, was among the leaders of the demonstration organized under the Arc de Triomphe on 30th May 1968 calling for a return to order. In a speech at Parc des expositions on 20th June 1968, he denounced nihilism and communism as threats to the national cohesion:

Certes, il faut réformer la Sorbonne et Nanterre, et peut-être même tout

¹⁵² James Le Sueur, *Uncivil War, Intellectuals and Identity Politics During the Decolonization of Algeria*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p.352, note 64.

l'enseignement, lorsque l'audiovisuel frappe à la porte. Mais ne voyez-vous pas que la réforme des enseignements, dans le monde entier, tend moins à les réformer qu'à les remplacer par quelque chose qui est parfois le chaos et voudrait souvent être la fraternité ? Ce que les étudiants, les vrais, attendent d'abord de nous, c'est l'espoir. Mais à côté de l'espoir, il y a le plus fascinant des sentiments négatifs, le vieux nihilisme tout à coup reparu avec son drapeau noir, et qui n'a plus d'espoir que dans la destruction. Nous ne sommes pas en face de besoins de réformes, mais en face d'une des crises les plus profondes que la civilisation ait connues.¹⁵³

Gilbert Cesbron, the Christian democrat novelist, would also condemn the category of intellectuals who renounced to stay “au-dessus de la mêlée”, following Benda's words forty years earlier. He would willingly express his scepticism on the intellectuals' participation to the May events in his essay *Ce que je crois*, in 1970, and in numerous TV programs. On 19th August 1971, on TV, he reiterated the idea that May 68 had ridiculed the universal values of reason, truth and justice:

L'humanité a 12 ans, elle est en plein âge ingrat. Nous croyons toujours, par une aberration incroyable, que nous sommes au siècle des Lumières, le summum, mais pas du tout. Ce que vous appelez le progrès est une dérision absolue, une caricature. Dans dix siècles, si l'humanité vit encore, elle considèrera ce que nous appelions le progrès comme une incroyable barbarie.¹⁵⁴

Raymond Aron also refused to call the May events a “revolution”. Instead, he preferred the words “émeute estudiantine”, “comédie révolutionnaire”, “carnaval et mascarade”, “délire collectif” and “péripétie triste de l'histoire”.¹⁵⁵ He believed that intellectuals only supported the revolt to court the student's attention. For him, intellectuals encouraged the use of violence and were indignant without cause:

Que faire dans un pays dont l'un des corps constitués les plus importants, à savoir les intellectuels chargés de gloire, n'admire que la destruction, sans concevoir un ordre susceptible de remplacer celui qu'il veut détruire? Je n'ai pas de réponse. Les intellectuels exercent normalement une fonction critique. Après tout, j'ai toujours critiqué volontiers les gouvernements français de telle sorte qu'on ne saurait m'accuser ni de conformisme, ni de servilité à l'égard du pouvoir, mais la fonction critique devient nihilisme lorsqu'elle dénonce la

¹⁵³ André Malraux, *Discours prononcé au Parc des expositions à Paris le 20 juin 1968*, <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire/andre-malraux/discours_politique_culture/parc_expositions.asp> [accessed 1 October 2016]

¹⁵⁴ Gilbert Cesbron, TV interview on his essay *Ce que je crois*, in *Le fond et la forme*, 19 August 1971 <<http://www.ina.fr/video/CPF10005718/gilbert-cesbron-ce-que-je-crois-video.html>> [accessed 1 October 2016]

¹⁵⁵ Raymond Aron, *La Révolution Introuvable*, (Paris : Fayard, 1968), p.111-135.

société globalement sans aucune représentation d'une autre société, lorsqu'elle prêche le culte de la violence pure.¹⁵⁶

Clearly for Malraux, Cesbron and Aron, intellectuals were engaged in a revolt for the sake of it and did not offer any alternative to improve the students' and workers' conditions. They always reframed the May events within the international context and refused to attribute a French specificity to the revolt.

Radio: infiltrating the masses in their intimacy

In the dissemination of the intellectual's ideas, the radio had a unique potential after the Liberation. In 1946, French people owned 5.5 million radio sets¹⁵⁷. In 1950, adults spent on average 118 minutes per day listening to the radio.¹⁵⁸ The Second World War had intensified the role of radio as a medium of propaganda. The state monopoly had been established in March 1945 and would last until 1981 when Mitterrand won the presidential election. However, peripheral radio stations such as Radio-Monte-Carlo and Radio-Luxembourg challenged this monopoly and several private operators were granted licenses by the government. The intellectuals' scepticism with regard to the radio was twofold: this new medium risked jeopardising the independence of their critical thinking and their target readership. This was the start of the ethical dilemma facing intellectuals in the second half of the twentieth century: more media exposure or more thinking and writing time? Intellectuals would debate about *l'art radiophonique* and some would be part of discussion groups to help design radio programmes. However, they were aware that radio could affect their status as intellectuals, especially under the state monopoly.

In October 1947, Sartre's review *Les Temps Modernes* would be offered a 25-minute programme "La Tribune des Temps Modernes". The *tribune* can be described as a radio genre in which a round-table of contributors discusses current affairs. The programme started broadcasting on 20th October 1947, the day after de Gaulle's RPF victory in the first round of the municipal elections. In fact, its first episode was a strong criticism of Gaullism. In his analysis of the radio programme in 1993, Michael Scriven explains that *Les Temps Modernes* are

¹⁵⁶ Aron, *La Révolution Introuvable*, p.136.

¹⁵⁷ Raymond Kuhn, *Media in France* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.90.

¹⁵⁸ Raymond Kuhn, *Media in France* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.79.

[...] slightly to the left of the SFIO – totally hostile to the RPF, extremely critical of the PCF and by implication generally supportive of the SFIO.¹⁵⁹

Scriven also raises questions about the potential involvement of the Ramadier government in the radio programme. The letters from Simone de Beauvoir to her lover, the American writer Nelson Algren, published in 1997 answered the questions initially raised by Scriven in 1993. Beauvoir wrote on 26th septembre 1947:

First the radio gives to the *Temps Modernes* a full hour each week to speak about what we like, in the way we like. You know what it means, the possibility of reaching thousands of people, and trying to make them think and feel in the way we believe right to think and feel... Then the Socialist Party wishes to confer with us, to try to make a connection between policy and philosophy. People here seem to begin to believe ideas are something important... I want to work, to work very much.¹⁶⁰

What Beauvoir seemed to imply is that the programme had been commissioned by the SFIO, but it is unclear whether Ramadier had any say in the making of the episodes. Ramadier clearly understood the potential of the radio: between February and July 1947, he gave 9 speeches on the radio to denounce the dangers of communism and explain his austerity policy.¹⁶¹

'La Tribune des Temps modernes' consisted in nine episodes, three of which were censored. The programme was cancelled during the week Schuman assumed power. In these episodes, they called for a third way between American capitalism and Russian communism. I will list below the topic of each episode:

20th October 1947 – Gaullism and the RPF

27th October 1947 – Communism and anti-communism

3rd November 1947 – Listeners' letters and definitions of existentialism

10th November 1947 – Liberalism and socialism

17th November 1947 – The socialist crisis

24th November 1947 – Union movements and social conflicts

1st December 1947 – The true meaning of the workers' demands

8th December 1947 – Two appeals to international opinion

¹⁵⁹ Michael Scriven, *Sartre and the media* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1993), p.79.

¹⁶⁰ Simone de Beauvoir, *Beloved Chicago Man: Letters to Nelson Algren 1947-1968*, (London: Phoenix, 1999), pp.68-69

¹⁶¹ Hélène Eck, 'Radio, Culture et Démocratie en France, une ambition mort-née (1944-1949)', in *Vingtième Siècle, revue d'histoire*, April-June 1991, Vol 30, Numéro 1, p. 57.

15th December 1947 – David Rousset on his return from Germany

The first episode was quite controversial as Alain Bonafé compared de Gaulle to Hitler. The second episode was a strong criticism of communism. The third episode was made up of the listeners' reactions to the first two episodes. What is striking is that none of the episodes discusses Ramadier's government though, which also contributes to the idea that Ramadier had commissioned the programme. These episodes would be aired on Mondays at 8.30pm, at a time when families were at home and could discuss these topics. What did it sound like? The episodes were semi-scripted. Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Beauvoir were regular contributors, but one could also hear Jean-Bertrand Pontalis and Alain Bonafé. It was at times very rigid and theatrical, especially in episode 8 when Pontalis and Bonafé pretend to be sceptical about two manifestos that Sartre has signed:

Sartre: - Pontalis et Bonafé, je vous ai apporté ces deux manifestes, vous savez, que les journaux viennent de publier. Je les ai signés et je souhaiterais vivement que vous les signiez aussi parce qu'il va y avoir un deuxième tour de signatures.

Bonafé: - Je ne donne pas ma signature comme ça! Quels sont ces manifestes? D'où en avez-vous l'idée? Qu'est-ce qu'il y a dedans?

Sartre also tried to create reciprocity between the team and their listeners by inviting them to react to the manifestos he has just read out:

Il s'agit de créer, ce qui est en somme la mission des intellectuels, un mouvement d'opinion. [...] Je crois qu'il serait bon de demander aux auditeurs d'envoyer leur accord [...] ou leur désaccord [...], de dire s'ils veulent aussi signer ce manifeste.

In asking listeners for their opinion, Sartre expected them to write to the radio. Of course, the French telephone system would only develop much later, in the mid-1970s under Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's presidency. Therefore, there was no real-time interaction with the public. As the third episode shows, the public did write to react to the first two episodes. However, it would be difficult to measure the success of this programme since it stopped after only six episodes. What were listeners retaining from this programme, at a time when most families would be having dinner? Still, Sartre was aware that a book could easily be forgotten and left unopen:

Le livre est inerte, il agit sur qui l'ouvre, mais il ne se fait pas ouvrir.¹⁶²

Sartre implied here that radio could catch the masses off guard and that even if they were not particularly looking to listen to a specific programme, intellectuals still had a chance to reach these listeners, albeit passive listeners. There was potentially a large audience to conquer by infiltrating the masses in their intimacy, but the programme stopped in December 1947, and as explained previously, Sartre would find another way of addressing the masses. His political movement the RDR was created in February 1948, but again this was a short-lived intervention. Sartre would give many subsequent radio interviews that we will examine in the next chapter, as they constitute an individual mode of intervention, not a group initiative. From October 1968, Jacques Chancel's radio programme, 'Radioscopie', would be another platform on which intellectuals were regularly invited. It was broadcast on France Inter every working day from 5 to 6pm until 1982, and again from 1988 to 1990. For example, Chancel interviewed Aron on 23 June 1969, Sartre on 7 February 1973, Gisèle Halimi in December 1973, Michel Foucault on 10 March 1975, and Claude Lévi-Strauss on 9th November 1988. The programme put intellectuals on the spot, as it was an intimate one-to-one interview for almost one hour, often starting with the interviewee's childhood. They were asked to talk about their background, their projects and positions on recent events such as May 68. Chancel also interviewed politicians, actors and singers. It was a live programme – as opposed to 'La Tribune des Temps modernes' – therefore there was nowhere to hide. By taking part in this programme, intellectuals gained a more authentic "voice" and the opportunity to explain their work.

Television : getting national and international recognition

Would intellectuals become more accessible on television too? The democratization of television sets in France took place at the end of the 1960s. The percentage of households with television sets grew from 1% in 1954 to 23.1% in 1962 and 61.9% in 1968.¹⁶³ Television reception and coverage was limited since the

¹⁶² Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p.322.

¹⁶³ INSEE, "L'Équipement des Français en biens durables fin 1968", in *Economie et statistique*, N°3, July-August 1969, pp.65-68.

first channel was only available to the entire country from 1961.¹⁶⁴ Following de Gaulle's coming to power in 1958, intellectuals witnessed official forgetting and public indifference to the Algerian War. Pierre Vidal-Naquet named this indifference "un édredon, une sorte d'oreiller de silence."¹⁶⁵ For him, the intellectuals' campaign against torture had failed. Thanks to the advent of television, General de Gaulle communicated "face-to-face" with the French and broadcast the evening news, pre-established by the Service de liaison interministériel (SLI). The first French television programme of international reporting, '5 colonnes à la une', was created on 9th January 1959, the day after de Gaulle took office. It was therefore the first French programme to show images of Algeria during the Algerian War. The first report on Algeria is about Sergeant Charlie Robert. This 22-year-old French man is presented first as a peacemaker and then as a fighter. He can be seen working with locals and playing with children, before fighting rebels with the help of the artillery and the air force. The report ends with his parents in tears and the presenter describing him as "un chic garçon comme il y en a tant en Algérie."¹⁶⁶ The scene is very theatrical and draws on the viewers' feelings by highlighting the parents' fear and pride for their son. Still today, the limited number of filmed archives and fiction movies prove that the media revolution was not enough to acknowledge collectively the Algerian war. A willingness to show, hear, and see the truth was needed. Commercially speaking, the market just was not there. And this is one of the revelations of the War for the intellectual: by entering a consumerist society, the intellectual became a distributor with a product to sell, faced with other potentially more appealing distributors and products.

In addition, fewer and fewer French people read newspapers and reviews between the 1960s and the 1980s. Indeed, according to the essay *Sociologie de la lecture en France: état des lieux*, only 46% of French people regularly read a daily newspaper in 1981, against 55% in 1973 and 59.7% in 1967. Even though the activity of reading

<https://www.epsilon.insee.fr/jspui/bitstream/1/17204/1/estat_1969_3_7.pdf> [accessed 21 June 2017]

¹⁶⁴ Isabelle Gaillard, 'De l'étrange lucarne à la télévision, histoire d'une banalisation (1949-1984)', in *Vingtième Siècle, revue d'histoire*, N°91, March 2006.

¹⁶⁵ Pierre Vidal-Naquet, extract from the interview for the documentary *Les Années Algériennes* by Bernard Favre and Benjamin Stora, 1990, broadcast on Antenne 2, September-October 1991, quoted in Benjamin Stora, *La Gangrène et l'Oubli*, (Paris: La Découverte, 1991), p.71.

¹⁶⁶ 'Compagnie opérationnelle d'Algérie: Sergent Robert', *Cinq Colonnes à la une*, 9th January 1959, < <http://www.ina.fr/video/CAF89001859> >, [accessed 21 June 2017]

books became widespread through the 1970s and 1980s, the number of “weak” readers (those who declared reading between 1 and 9 books per year) increased from 24% in 1973 to 32% in 1988, whereas the number of “strong” readers (25 books per year or more) decreased from 29% in 1973 to 22% in 1988.¹⁶⁷ Unfortunately, at the time, many surveys focused on the increase in the number of readers in France or the number of television sets, but not so much on the impact of television on the number of readers. The intellectuals’ written word was definitively in competition with a new media, but they would also benefit from this new media by appearing in literary Television programmes such as *Apostrophes* that was on the air every Friday night between January 1975 and June 1990. It was a weekly one-hour talk show hosted and created by Bernard Pivot, attracting between three and five million viewers per show.¹⁶⁸ It included one-to-one interviews and group discussions. This programme marks a transition to a new generation of intellectuals rejecting Marxism in the mid-1970s, *Les Nouveaux Philosophes*. The public discovered them on 27 May 1977 when Pivot invited Bernard-Henri Lévy and André Glucksmann to discuss the question: “Les Nouveaux Philosophes sont-ils de droite ou de gauche?” Some of the programme’s early titles demonstrate the general reflexion engaged at the time on the transitional place of literature in society: on 12th March 1975, the programme discussed the question “C’est de la politique ou de la littérature?” and on 21st March 1975, the main theme was “Le spectacle est dans les livres” (film as a photo-novel). The influence of mass media was also a cause for concern: on 4th July 1975, the episode “La radio, la télévision et le pouvoir” discussed the quality of programmes, governmental pressure and television monopoly, while the episode of the 23rd April 1976 “L’influence de la télévision sur le public et du public sur la télévision” recognized the central place of the viewer. Subsequent French literary talk shows never were as popular as *Apostrophes*. Pivot launched a new show in 1991 called *Bouillon de Culture* about literature, but also other forms of art such as films, plays, music, fashion, gastronomie, etc. Somehow, this new show never really replaced

¹⁶⁷ Jean-François Hersent, ‘Sociologie de la lecture en France: état des lieux’, *INSEE* (2000), <http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?ref_id=ip1101®_id=0> [accessed 1 October 2016].

¹⁶⁸ Hervé de Saint Hilaire, ‘«Apostrophes»: la vie littéraire entre parenthèses’, in *Le Figaro*, 30th June 2009
< <http://www.lefigaro.fr/programmes-tele/2009/06/30/03012-20090630ARTFIG00633-apostrophes-la-vie-litteraire-entre-parentheses-.php> >, [accessed 21 June 2017]

Apostrophes whose lively debates had turned viewers into readers by making literature accessible.

Television also helped internationalise French intellectuals. On 4th October 1970, the BBC broadcast the first episode of *Roads to freedom*, a thirteen-part adaptation of Sartre's three novels, *Les Chemins de la liberté*. Sartre's trilogy was published between 1945 and 1949 and tells the story of a philosophy teacher Mathieu Delarue during the Occupation. It was broadcast again on the BBC in 1976. I will also explain in chapter four that Bernard-Henri Lévy regularly appears on television abroad, mostly as a consultant on French current affairs on CNN or as a recurrent guest on the Charlie Rose show, which gives him more recognition than he would receive in France.

The Internet: the intellectual's loss of the monopoly of *engagement*

With the Internet, the lack of reciprocity between the intellectual and the masses fades away. Intellectuals can finally communicate with the masses without censorship, without needing the Parisian microcosm, whether they have been asked their opinion or not and whether they have recently published something or not. Their relationship with the public is more authentic and horizontal since they share the same social networks. In fact, the transmitter-receiver relationship that applied to other media used by intellectuals such as reviews, radio and television programmes is now obsolete because the frontier between transmitters and receivers of knowledge is blurred on platforms like Twitter. This non-hierarchical relationship could be described as a rhizome, a concept associated with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari :

Dans un rhizome on entre par n'importe quel côté, chaque point se connecte avec n'importe quel autre, il est composé de directions mobiles, sans dehors ni fin, seulement un milieu, par où il croît et déborde, sans jamais relever d'une unité ou en dériver ; sans sujet ni objet.¹⁶⁹

This ramification process defined by Deleuze and Guattari is the skeleton of any social media nowadays. It can be entered at any point and does not have any logical

¹⁶⁹ Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux: Capitalisme et Schizophrénie 2*, (Paris: Minuit, 1980), p. 13

pattern to its growth. It can be broken off at any point but it will always start again elsewhere. Any participant can be connected to any other, no matter how similar or different. They are inter-related. Therefore they are all “universels singuliers” – universal in the sense that they share the same socio-historical context but singular since they still express their individual subjective thinking.

Intellectuals have gained in reciprocity, but as a result they have lost in legitimacy. Social networks are made up of participants, no more transmitters and receivers. If anyone can participate, the intellectual’s voice is diluted by the presence of other participants. The credentials that made the intellectual’s reputation – their normalien background, their ideological journey, their participation in May 68, etc. – are not valid on this platform where the only credential is the contribution made by the participant. In fact, if their contributions are not deemed relevant or clear enough, they will not attract any followers. Their interventions have the potential to touch millions of people, but they can also go unnoticed. Ultimately, the power is in the hands of the masses that can decide whether to “follow” intellectuals on social media or not, whereas intellectuals used to invade their audience’s media when the television, the radio and the press ruled the information world.

The masses have gained certain agency in shaping their individual views. They can choose the causes they want to defend instead of being told by intellectuals what cause is worth fighting for. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, there has been a mistrust of ideologies in Western society. In France, parties of the Left and the Right have lost their characteristics and are undergoing an identity crisis. Debates have shifted towards religion and human rights rather than political ideologies and therefore they are less divisive. There is a general willingness towards tolerance and acceptance when it comes to religion. It is also a much more private matter than politics in France, a secular country. Therefore, religion is not necessarily compatible with online activism and media exposure.

The defense of human rights has been professionalised and democratized at the same time. It is the focus of many NGOs, online petitions, and crowdfunding campaigns. The intellectual’s voice does not resonate anymore, as deplored by Edgar Morin on Twitter:

J’ai deux livres parus il y a 30 ans, de plus en plus actuels, et que personne
n’achète
Terre patrie

Science avec conscience¹⁷⁰

Morin, who was born in 1921, almost tweets everyday, in French, sometimes several times per day. He has more than 94,000 followers. I asked him whether the 140-character limit was problematic for him and this was his reply:

Dans certains cas, ça me contraint à condenser, mais c'est pas mal. Ça me contraint à la forme courte des maximes, si vous voulez. Mais comme par ailleurs j'ai fait des oeuvres très longues, comme *La Méthode* qui fait plusieurs centaines de pages, je ne suis pas frustré parce que ce n'est pas mon seul mode d'intervention. Au contraire, j'aime beaucoup cette façon de pouvoir donner une réflexion, une idée dans une forme lapidaire. [...] d'un côté ma façon de penser nécessite de relier les choses, donc de m'exprimer assez longuement, mais d'un autre côté il y a des formules qui me permettent de concentrer ce que j'ai envie de dire.

Morin implies here that his previous publications legitimise his brief interventions today. However, when reading the replies to the tweet mentioned earlier, it is clear that some of his followers have not actually read his books. His active participation in the Resistance may be one of the reasons why he has attracted some of them. His authenticity commands respect. Furthermore, the Edgar Morin Centre, one of the research units of the French Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), has been named after him. He has contributed to social sciences by carrying out his own research and producing his own theories. Important institutions have recognized his achievements, therefore the masses can endorse him online without taking much risk. When comparing him to Bernard-Henri Lévy who is also very active online, it is clear that the leader of the short-lived New Philosophers school cannot boast the same prestige. This prestige is important, as it will motivate the public to look up the intellectual online in the first place. Without it, no matter how strong the intellectual's online presence is, the intellectual will not be found.

What does it mean to have a strong online presence? It means that the existence of an individual can easily be found with an online search, possibly on different platforms as it is the case with Lévy who has a Twitter account with 61,000 followers, his own website and his review's website. The visibility provided by the Internet can also turn against the intellectual: when looking up Lévy on Google, the first link that

¹⁷⁰ Edgar Morin, on Twitter, 2nd March 2018.

comes up is a Wikipedia page on the philosopher, the second link is an article from *Observer*, titled “Why does everyone hate Bernard-Henri Lévy?” Further, how does this strong online presence compare to that of other public figures and social movements? For example, the French astronaut Thomas Pesquet has attracted more than 1.5 million people on his Facebook page by posting pictures from space during his 6-month ISS mission. Role models and their achievements certainly captivate the public’s attention. After all, Pesquet could be described as an intellectual too, although he is not a *lettré* but a scientist: he has condemned Trump’s withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, praised European cooperation and taken aerial pictures of conflict zones. Some of his posts are also translated into English to reach a wider audience. The public is also drawn to petition websites such as Change.org, self-described as “the world’s platform for change”. Why would a petition signed by 30 intellectuals have more impact than a petition signed by a million of anonymous people? Intellectuals have lost their monopoly of *engagement* and petitions. What was the last impactful petition signed by intellectuals in France? Probably *le Manifeste des 343* published on 5th April 1971 in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, written by Simone de Beauvoir and asking for abortion rights. It scandalized public opinion, but eventually led to the adoption of the Veil Law, named after the Health Minister Simone Veil who legalized abortion in 1975. This Manifesto was already a turning point, as it was not just signed by female writers, but also by actresses, filmmakers, and singers who had undergone abortion. These new opinion leaders proved that they could be clear-sighted and influential too. The development of mass culture diversify our references and reduce the importance of the literary elite, while online platforms now allow ordinary citizens to sign petitions for social change addressed to political leaders.

What has become of seriality, the disengagement that Sartre feared in 1960 in *Critique de la raison dialectique*? Did his prophecy materialize with the Internet that diverts the public’s attention from common purposes? A survey published by Harris Interactive in January 2016 and titled “La France s’engage” showed that in the top five actions that contributed to improving society according to the people surveyed were recycling (89%), voting (88%), being a responsible consumer (73%),

signing a petition (69%), and looking after relatives (62%).¹⁷¹ Their *engagement* was mainly individual and local.

If *engagement* is now lived anonymously and separately by the masses, seriality must not be seen as an obstacle to *engagement*. Of course, when Sartre warned us of the dangers of seriality, the technological context was very different. The radio and television allowed very little response from their passive audience. It was impossible to imagine that online petitions, crowdfunding and NGOs would appeal to the masses one day. Thanks to the Internet, *engagement* in the twenty-first century does not belong exclusively to intellectuals and the status of intellectual does not belong exclusively to the *lettrés*.

Chapter two set out to examine the different forms of intervention used by intellectuals between the Liberation and today and to establish whether they triggered social change and *engagement*. Out of all the forms analyzed, reviews and newspapers are the medium that really allowed them to disseminate and clarify their work. Reviews only addressed a small segment of the population but gave intellectuals the opportunity to develop their thought without having to compromise on the number of words or simplify their message. They were in control of their own reviews, which were the continuation of their literature. By intervening in national newspapers, they also reached the masses using the printed word, a tool that is the essence of the intellectual. The only non-written mass media that served the intellectual was the radio after the Liberation, before it competed with other mass media and entertainment. It gave them a more authentic and pervasive voice and also helped explain their work, although they sometimes faced censorship and did not always master the skills of the orator. Both modes of interventions, the press and the radio, share one common point: their heyday took place in the two decades after the War, when the world was divided into two ideologies and intellectuals still had the monopoly of culture.

Other modes of intervention have not been as successful. Their political interventions – political movements, positions in the government – were not

¹⁷¹ Survey by Harris Interactive, “La France s’engage. Etat des représentations et visages de l’engagement”, conducted between 25th and 27th January 2016, with a sample of 1624 French people, < <http://harris-interactive.fr/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2016/01/Rapport-Harris-La-France-sengage-Havas.pdf> >, [accessed 21 June 2017].

compatible with the constant evolution of their thought and did not allow for periods of detachment to dedicate to their written work. The radicalization of their interventions, and for some of them the absence of intervention, were often not understood by the public and went against their role of guardians of universal values. Television made literature more accessible with programmes such as *Apostrophes* and it internationalized intellectuals, but at the same time it put them in competition with entertainment shows against which they did not stand a chance. The success of television also meant that the number of readers would decline. The Internet is finally the chance for intellectuals to converse with the public and their peers on an equal footing but many intellectuals who have a strong online presence use it to address the masses without really engaging in a conversation. They still conceive their *engagement* as an individual one-way contribution to society. The Internet has also generated a new type of intellectuals who are not necessarily *lettrés*. As shown by the example of the astronaut Thomas Pesquet, other professions in science are taking a stand on politics and social and environmental matters. The Internet has also facilitated the advent of a new generation of *artistes engagés*, mainly actors and singers, overshadowing intellectuals who often defend the same causes. Finally, the Internet has democratized *engagement* by providing the masses with platforms for change. Intellectuals may not have survived these successive waves of mass media, but their original tool, petitions, is now in the hand of ordinary citizens and it is certainly the best legacy they could have left.

Chapter three – Sartre l'incontournable

Jean-Paul Sartre embodied the total *intellectuel engagé* and was in many ways the heir of Emile Zola in his mission to combat injustice. I intend to show how he rejuvenated the classic definition of the intellectual by mastering different genres. After teaching at different *lycées* in Le Havre, Laon and Paris between 1931 and 1945, the writer and philosopher popularized existentialism and began the anti-academic tradition of reviews and petitions. Sartre progressively engaged in the process of shifting from literature to audio-visual methods. He believed in the power of radio, television, and cinema. I demonstrate in this chapter that Sartre provides a model for the ways in which *engagement* was democratized in the 20th century, from his status of spokesperson of the people to that of activist among the people. His objective was always to get closer to the masses, moving away from the hierarchy between the writer and the reader, towards more reciprocity. Therefore, I draw a parallel between the evolution of the form of his work and that of his philosophy and perception of the status of intellectual.

Sartre has proven to be the model for all subsequent intellectuals. He was *incontournable* for late-twentieth-century intellectuals, who did not necessarily agree on all his positions but acknowledged the novelty of his concrete interventions among the people. He constitutes a point of reference for the intellectuals who are the subjects of the next two case studies: Bernard-Henri Lévy and Stéphane Hessel. Lévy wrote a biography of Sartre in 2000, *Le Siècle de Sartre*. Hessel was taught by Sartre at the Ecole Normale Supérieure and regularly quoted Sartre in his work. Many secondary sources consider Sartre's death as one of the main factors in the decline of the intellectual on the public stage. However, I argue that he triggered a revolution in the modes of action of the intelligentsia, and that he was, in a way, a beginning for civic *engagement*.

This chapter provides a six-part analysis of Sartre's modes of action. The first part deals with the convergence of literature, philosophy and politics in his work. It traces Sartre's line of thought on the process of writing from his childhood until the end of his career. Sartre moved from writing as a way to appropriate the world to writing as a way to communicate and identify problems. What is interesting is that as early as 1936 in his philosophical essay, *La Transcendance de l'Ego*, Sartre reflected on Husserl's phenomenology and the definition of *action*. Several of his following essays also pointed towards literature as a mode of action per se, until the 1960s when he demystified literature as part of the bourgeois ideology in *Critique de*

la raison dialectique (1960) and *Les Mots* (1963). This attempt to distance himself from literature – and crucially, his increasingly impaired vision - translated into activism. The second part focuses on Sartre's plays. From *Bariona* in 1940, his plays helped explain and popularize his work. The third part is about his conception of the press, from "La Présentation" of his review *Les Temps modernes* in which he claimed in 1945 "L'engagement ne doit en aucun cas faire oublier la littérature" to his six-month withdrawal from literature during the launch of *Libération*. In parallel, Sartre granted a high number of interviews to explain his actions in France and abroad, as well as with the Maoists, and sometimes to give supplementary information to help the reader understand his philosophical essays, and of course for self-promotion. The fourth part of this chapter highlights the evolution of the interaction between Sartre and his interviewers: he went from interviews to dialogues, and even group reflection at the end of his life. Sartre gradually gave his interviewers more speaking time. I argue that this progression mirrors his change of views on the role of the intellectual: Sartre no longer wanted to be the people's spokesman; he wanted the people to speak. However, this evolution also reveals Sartre's limited agency from 1973 when his health problems worsened: topics of discussions were decided by others, his answers seemed directed and influenced. I also examine Sartre's interventions on the radio. I have already analyzed his participation to the short-lived *Tribune des Temps modernes* in the previous chapter; I will now deal with his personal interventions on *Radioscopie* and foreign radio stations such as Radio Canada and Radio Télévision Suisse. The fifth part of this chapter is dedicated to Sartre's visionary interest in television, which he explained as soon as 1948 in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* Sartre wanted to widen his non-bourgeois readership, defend literature, but also inject some dynamism into the French intelligentsia by transposing its ideas from books to television and cinema. By questioning the primacy of writing from 1968, he partly managed to deconsecrate literature as an institution. He even accepted to be the subject of a feature-length documentary, *Sartre par lui-même*, released in 1976. Unfortunately, when it came to directing a TV programme with Simone de Beauvoir, Pierre Victor and Philippe Gavi about 20th century history, Sartre was confronted with state censorship. Still, his attempt to connect with TV viewers – or "serialized" people¹⁷², in his own words –

¹⁷² Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique de la Raison Dialectique*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), p.373.

perfectly illustrates a lifelong willingness to fill the gap between his condition of bourgeois intellectual and public opinion. The sixth and last part of this chapter focuses on Sartre's activism in political causes. Even though the radicalization of his *engagement* occurred during the Algerian War, May 68 and in the 1970s when he gravitated towards Maoism, his activism goes back to the Second World War when his Resistance group was involved in propaganda, publishing newspapers and leaflets. Sartre was often depicted as "le pétitionnaire de service" for signing more petitions and manifestos than any other intellectual, between the Liberation and his death. His activism allowed him to progressively free his status of intellectual from its national rooting, towards a more universal moral position. Sartre was also criticized for taking a radical stance. For example, he advocated political violence as a case of *légitime défense* against the French colonizers in Algeria and justified Palestinian terrorism after the attacks during the Munich Olympic Games. Still, the fact that he kept writing on Flaubert in *L'Idiot de la famille* until the end of his career between 1971 and 1972 is revealing: even if Sartre called for a new activist intellectual, he struggled to detach himself from the image of the classic intellectual. Sartre was very much aware of this contradiction:

Je me suis attaché, depuis dix-sept ans, à un ouvrage sur Flaubert qui ne saurait intéresser les ouvriers car il est écrit dans un style compliqué et certainement bourgeois. [...] Or, justement, cet ouvrage (en admettant qu'il apporte quelque chose) représente, dans sa nature même, une frustration du peuple. C'est lui qui me rattache aux lecteurs bourgeois. Par lui, je suis encore bourgeois et le demeurerai tant que je ne l'aurai pas achevé. Il existe donc une contradiction très particulière en moi : j'écris encore des livres pour la bourgeoisie et je me sens solidaire des travailleurs qui veulent la renverser.¹⁷³

In his 1972 *Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels*, Sartre makes the distinction between the literary and non-literary intellectual. He first describes the notion of *universalité singulière* as the tension between the endorsement of universal values and the particularism of the individuals. Bourgeois are not as universal as they mean to be. What poses as universality actually masks bourgeois self-interest. His analysis of the relationship between reading and writing shows that he has overcome his obsession with writing and finally accepted his contradiction. This universal singular

¹⁷³ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Les maos en France', *Situations X*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), pp. 61-62.

resides in both human beings and language; therefore the literary writer is *engagé* in the sense that he or she makes the readers aware of their own condition. He concludes that the degree of *engagement* of the literary intellectual is superior to that of non-literary intellectuals:

Au lieu que les autres intellectuels ont vu naître leur fonction d'une contradiction entre les exigences particularistes de la classe dominante, il trouve dans sa tâche interne l'obligation de demeurer sur le plan du vécu tout en suggérant l'universalisation comme l'affirmation de la vie à l'horizon. En ce sens, il n'est pas intellectuel par accident, comme eux, mais par essence.¹⁷⁴

I have explained in the previous chapter how the Internet had facilitated the advent of non-literary intellectuals and non-literary figures of *engagement*. Literary intellectuals may have had a greater degree of *engagement* in Sartre's era, but I challenge this idea in our interconnected era.

The convergence of literature, philosophy and politics

The evolution of Sartre's views on the reasons for writing is clearly visible throughout his critical essays and autobiography: from naming and owning the world around him to interacting with it and giving it a voice. Anna Boschetti has explained in her book *Sartre et Les Temps modernes* how demand had shaped Sartre's work.¹⁷⁵ The convergence of literature, philosophy and politics in his work can be explained by the economic and geopolitical events French society went through: the economic crisis, the Second World War, the Occupation, the Cold War, the Algerian War, and May 68. Boschetti explains that these events pushed Sartre to abandon his first characters' solipsism and contingency. Instead he created characters that were both free and anchored in a socio-historical context. He answered a social demand for prophetism and helped rationalise unprecedented events.

His maternal grandfather, Charles Schweitzer, a teacher of German and founder of the *Institut des Langues Vivantes* in Paris, introduced him to reading classics and writing between the age of 9 and 10:

J'avais trouvé ma religion: rien ne me parut plus important qu'un livre. La bibliothèque, j'y voyais un temple. [...] toute chose humblement sollicitait un

¹⁷⁴ Sartre, *Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels*, p.117.

¹⁷⁵ Anna Boschetti, *Sartre et les Temps modernes*, (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1985), p.67-73

nom, le lui donner c'était à la fois la créer et la prendre. Sans cette illusion capitale, je n'eusse jamais écrit.¹⁷⁶

At this stage, Sartre was still unaware of the communicative function of language. A couple of years later, a second family member became partly responsible for his thirst for writing: his stepfather, Joseph Mancy, who worked as a Marine engineer. For Sartre, writing would become an act of rebellion:

Je pensais que mes idées étaient vraies. Et les siennes simplement limitées à la science. [...] ça a été, constamment, le type contre lequel j'écrivais. Toute ma vie; et le fait d'écrire, c'était contre lui.¹⁷⁷

Sartre believed that all sciences belonged to philosophy, therefore he chose to study philosophy at the ENS in order to acquire "the knowledge of the world"¹⁷⁸, which he could in turn use in literature. His intention was to use his philosophical knowledge to serve his literary talent:

[...] il y a une hiérarchie, et la hiérarchie c'est la philosophie en second et la littérature en premier. Je souhaite obtenir l'immortalité par la littérature, la philosophie est un moyen d'y accéder.¹⁷⁹

This is precisely the hierarchy against which the sociologist Bourdieu argues in his 1979 book, *Distinction*. Bourdieu explains that the ranking of art enables the cultured elite to assert itself and prevents the dominated working class from making its own aesthetic choices.

In his first – unfinished – philosophical essay, *La Légende de la vérité*, published in 1931 in the review *Bifur*, Sartre ambitiously aimed at enlightening the readers with his personal philosophical ideas. More importantly, he wanted to depart from the collective ideas of scholars, philosophers and bourgeois; instead, he wished to think for himself.¹⁸⁰ This tendency to act as a lone wolf is reflected in the fact that Sartre was always dismissive when talking about his intellectual influences, Kant, Marx, Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger. He would barely acknowledge reading their

¹⁷⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Les Mots*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), pp.46-47.

¹⁷⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Entretiens', in Simone de Beauvoir, *La Cérémonie des adieux*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), p.186.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, p.177.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, p.200.

¹⁸⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Entretiens', in Simone de Beauvoir, *La Cérémonie des adieux*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), p.198.

books and would never speak of them as ‘intellectual models’. Similarly, in *Carnets de la drôle de guerre* written between September 1939 and June 1940, he rejects Gide’s influence despite mentioning briefly his *Journal*. He does not mention *Voyage au Congo*, *Le Retour du Tchad* and *Retour de l’URSS*. At the time, Gide represented the literary elitism against which Sartre had to assert himself.

Still, it is when Sartre stayed in Berlin in 1934 to study Husserl’s methodology that he wrote his first complete philosophical essay *La Transcendance de l’Ego*. Several primary sources like Simone de Beauvoir¹⁸¹ and secondary sources like Alain Renaut¹⁸², explained how initially Sartre wasn’t interested in Husserl’s phenomenology and did not attend Husserl’s conferences in La Sorbonne in 1929. Raymond Aron had stayed in Berlin before Sartre in 1931-1932 at the French Institute where he had studied Husserl and brought it to Sartre’s attention on his return to Paris. Sartre would re-use Husserl’s view on consciousness, opposing it to psychologism, but he would distinguish between active consciousness and spontaneous consciousness in order to serve his position on action and freedom:

[...] le doute spontané qui m’envahit lorsque j’entrevois un objet dans la pénombre est une *conscience*, mais le doute méthodique de Descartes est une action, c’est-à-dire un objet transcendant de la conscience réflexive.¹⁸³

For Sartre, reflexive consciousness, or intentionality, is an action that removes the subject from contingency and sets him free. In that sense, Sartre’s subsequent interests – ontology, ethics, existentialism and committed writing – would later tally with this philosophy of consciousness and his ideal of freedom. However, the nine months he would spend in the Trèves camp would transform his initial idea of freedom, as the action of an individual, into a collective enterprise towards the liberation of society.

In 1938, Sartre’s existentialist novel, *La Nausée*, definitely put an end to contingency. Its characters face their historicity, but the novel did not find the same reception as *La Transcendance de l’ego*. Most critics acknowledged Sartre’s talent as a novelist but they regretted that his philosophical novel was too methodical and rigorous. Albert Camus’s review of the novel sums up this general opinion:

¹⁸¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *La Force de l’Âge*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p.156.

¹⁸² Alain Renaut, *Sartre, Le dernier philosophe*, (Paris: Grasset, 1993), p.127.

¹⁸³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *La transcendance de l’ego: esquisse d’une description phénoménologique* (1936), (Paris: Vrin, 1992), p.52.

Il s'agit aujourd'hui d'un roman où cet équilibre est rompu, où la théorie fait du tord à la vie. La chose est assez commune depuis quelque temps. Mais ce qu'il y a de frappant dans *la Nausée*, c'est que des dons émouvants de romancier et les jeux de l'esprit le plus lucide et le plus cruel y sont à la fois prodigués et gaspillés.¹⁸⁴

For Camus, in Sartre's first philosophical novel, the voice of the philosopher muffled the voice of the novelist. *L'Être et le Néant* in 1943 would be the start of Sartre's existentialist success. Sartre adopted a new style in philosophy that consisted in illustrating his theoretical reflexion with concrete examples. He chose the image of the "garçon de café" to explain his concept of bad faith:

Mais à quoi donc joue-t-il? Il ne faut pas l'observer longtemps pour s'en rendre compte: il joue à être garçon de café. [...] le garçon de café joue avec sa condition pour la réaliser.¹⁸⁵

According to Sartre, by trying to become only a social function, the waiter was denying his freedom and his ability to decide for himself. Sartre was also defining here the intellectual, and in fact any conscious being (*pour-soi*), through the notions of radical freedom and individual responsibility. His philosophy would therefore justify his future actions.

In 1945 and 1949, in *Les Chemins de la Liberté*, a trilogy of novels taking place before and during the Second World, Sartre's writing became more political and semi-autobiographical, as he had written them at that time too. Therefore, these novels echoed the recent war experiences of the readers. Moreover, Baert analyzes in his book Sartre's rise at this particular moment in time. Sartre had taken part in the Comité National des Ecrivains (CNE), a clandestine writers' union created in 1941 that published an underground journal, *Les Lettres françaises*, and lists of writers who had collaborated with the enemy, but in the end it had relatively spared publishers. The latter had been a vital link in the dissemination of both collaborationist and Resistance writers and they were still needed after the Liberation. Through his participation in the CNE, Sartre had gained power in the publishing world and would now receive the necessary attention to launch his review

¹⁸⁴ Albert Camus, 'La Nausée de Jean-Paul Sartre', *Alger Républicain*, 20 October 1938, Le Salon de lecture, p.5.

¹⁸⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Être et le Néant*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1943) p.98.

Les Temps Modernes.¹⁸⁶ The outcome benefited Sartre, the publishing world and the ideas of *engagement* and resistance, as the review is still published nowadays by Gallimard.

By putting an end to the “man-subject”, Sartre got closer to the new intellectual: he rejected classical bourgeois Humanism after his experience of prisoner of war, in the sense that he did not believe in Man; he believed in the existence of individuals. He argued that men existed as individuals before being defined as a concept. He made this position clear in *Cahiers pour une morale* (1947-1948): ‘l’Homme ne peut appliquer l’universel à l’homme’.¹⁸⁷ He reiterated the idea that Man, as an abstract term, does not exist and that freedom can only be achieved through individual actions for the common good in *Critique de la Raison Dialectique* (1960):

Impossible d’exister au milieu des hommes sans qu’ils deviennent objets pour moi et pour eux par moi sans que je sois objet pour eux, sans que par eux ma subjectivité prenne sa réalité objective comme intériorisation de mon objectivité humaine.¹⁸⁸

It is important to understand how this notion of “individual responsibility for the collective good” grew in Sartre as it can explain some of his subsequent choices: socialism and the successive forms of his committed writing.

From 1948, with his essay *Qu’est-ce que la littérature?*, until May 68, Sartre endeavoured to make literature less elitist. This effort was also seen as an attempt to redeem himself for not taking part more actively in the Resistance and to free of guilt his social class. For Tony Judt, Sartre was trying to legitimise his status within society:

[...] Sartre s’efforça de donner le plus de “poids” possible à l’acte littéraire, de façon à prêter à son auteur une gravité existentielle dont il est autrement dépourvu.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Patrick Baert, *The Existentialist moment, The Rise of Sartre as a Public Intellectual*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), p.72.

¹⁸⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Cahiers pour une morale* (1947-1948), (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), p. 95.

¹⁸⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p.186.

¹⁸⁹ Tony Judt, *Past imperfect*, (Paris: Fayard, 1992), p.99.

In *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, Sartre made it his mission as a writer to prevent anyone from ignoring the world and feeling detached and innocent.¹⁹⁰ However, he would later distance himself from literature. First, through his reflection on language and communication in *Critique de la Raison Dialectique*, in 1960, Sartre established that the inequality – or in his words, the lack of reciprocity – between the author and the reader was insurmountable. He confirmed his disillusion with his autobiography, *Les Mots*, in 1963. With hindsight, he told Simone de Beauvoir what his intention was when writing *Les Mots*:

J'ai voulu qu'il [*Les Mots*] soit plus littéraire que les autres parce que j'estimais que c'était en quelque sorte une manière de dire adieu à une certaine littérature et qu'il fallait à la fois la réaliser, l'expliquer, prendre congé d'elle. J'ai voulu être littéraire pour montrer l'erreur d'être littéraire.¹⁹¹

His detachment from literature as a bourgeois institution manifested itself in his refusal to accept the Nobel Prize for literature in 1964. And yet the following year, Sartre showed in the conferences he gave in Japan – which would then be gathered in 1972 in *Plaidoyer pour les Intellectuels* – that even if he disapproved of institutionalised literature, he still valued the universalizing effect of literature:

L'écrivain, pas plus qu'un autre, ne peut échapper à l'insertion dans le monde, et ses écrits sont le type même de l'universel singulier: quels qu'ils soient, ils ont ces deux faces complémentaires: la singularité historique de leur être, l'universalité de leurs visées – ou l'inverse (l'universalité de l'être et la singularité des visées).¹⁹²

Therefore, although Sartre denounced the hierarchical relationship between the writer and the reader in 1960, he qualified this statement in 1965 by acknowledging that literature – and life in itself – carried a duality of purpose: singularity and universality. Sartre argued that the intellectual had to acknowledge the prejudices and conditioning of his own bourgeois background (the 'singulier') before being able to address the 'universel'. That same year, in *Que peut la littérature?*, he also looked to empower the reader using a metaphor: the writer may write the musical score, but

¹⁹⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p.31.

¹⁹¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Entretiens', in Simone de Beauvoir, *La Cérémonie des adieux*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), p.275.

¹⁹² Sartre, *Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels*, (Paris : Gallimard, 1972), p.441.

it is the reader who plays it.¹⁹³ For Sartre, the act of reading freed the reader from social conditioning and oppression.

In a way, Sartre progressively shifted from a reflection on the purpose of writing (*Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* 1948) – and the uncomfortable position of the writer in institutionalised literature – to a reflection on the purpose of reading (*Que peut la littérature?* 1965). By looking at literature from a different prism, Sartre discovered – quite late in his career – the communicative function of language:

A partir du moment où vous savez que le mot n'est pas fait pour posséder la table, mais pour la désigner à l'autre, vous avez un rapport de translucidité qui vous renvoie à l'homme, mais qui vous décharge de l'Absolu.¹⁹⁴

This also had to do with his philosophy of freedom: the creative freedom of the writer sets in motion the creative freedom of the reader. The May 68 events and the new media revolved much more around the reader and viewer than the intellectual. Television became a facilitating medium for helping his readers' comprehension of his work. On television, intellectuals would have to popularize their concepts or risk being removed from the schedule. They depended on audience figures. While Sartre managed to adapt to the changing times, part of him remained faithful to the classic intellectual through the writing of *L'Idiot de la Famille* until 1972.

In parallel with his growing fame, Sartre wrote prefaces for French and Francophone writers throughout his career to defend ethical and political causes in the Third-World and in France. The fact that he mainly wrote prefaces for friends and partisans shows that he had no interest in his competitors. His supremacy was undisputed. His prefaces also illustrate his desire to widen his readership but also reveal the evolution of his position on political violence. Their lyrical content and controversial stances are a reminder that Sartre was a philosopher and a writer, not a diplomat or a political analyst. Gisèle Sapiro's research on pamphlets identified characteristics, all of which could apply to Sartre's prefaces:

Il y a différentes façons d'aborder la politique pour un homme de lettres, du mode anecdotique littérisé à l'élaboration doctrinale qui le rapproche de la

¹⁹³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Que peut la littérature?*, Conference with S. de Beauvoir, Y. Berger, J.-P. Faye, J. Ricardou, J. Semprun, (Paris : Union générale d'éditions, 1965), p.120.

¹⁹⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations IX*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), p.44.

figure du penseur. Le style varie également, depuis la distance lettrée jusqu'à la violence stylistique qui caractérise le polémiste.¹⁹⁵

What is even more striking when reading these prefaces is the way they steal the limelight from the books they introduce – not necessarily for the right reasons. Huge discrepancies can sometimes be noticed between Sartre's preface and the author's book. Sartre appeared more controversial in his prefaces than he ever was in the rest of his work, perhaps because he had a limited number of pages to develop his thoughts or because he was out of his zone of expertise. In 1948, Sartre wrote *Orphée Noire*, which served as a preface to *Anthologie de la Nouvelle Poésie Nègre et Malgache de langue française*, compiled by Léopold Senghor. In this essay, Sartre defined *négritude* as the opposite of colonial racism and warned the reader of the end of white supremacy and colonies. However, he wrote in a defiant and peremptory style that perpetuated a sense of racial division:

Tous ceux, colons et complices, qui ouvriront ce livre, croiront lire, par dessus une épaule, des lettres qui ne leur sont pas destinées. C'est aux noirs que ces noirs s'adressent et c'est pour leur parler des noirs; leur poésie n'est ni satirique ni imprécatoire : c'est une prise de conscience.¹⁹⁶

By claiming that these poems are only directed to black people, Sartre moves away from Senghor's universal aspiration to racial unity. In the preface to Fanon's *Les Damnés de la Terre* in 1961, he also encourages the use of violence by the colonized over the colonizer, a statement that goes beyond Fanon's message:

Car, en le premier temps de la révolte, il faut tuer: abattre un Européen c'est faire d'une pierre deux coups, supprimer en même temps un oppresseur et un opprimé : restent un homme mort et un homme libre ; le survivant.¹⁹⁷

Even at the end of his career, Sartre advocated revolutionary violence when explaining the Maoists' objectives. In the preface to Michèle Manceaux's *Les Maos en France*, he declared:

Pour les maos, [...] partout où la violence révolutionnaire prend naissance dans les masses, elle est immédiatement et profondément morale car les travailleurs

¹⁹⁵ Sapiro, *La responsabilité de l'écrivain*, (Paris: Seuil, 2011), p.592.

¹⁹⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Orphée Noire*, preface to *Anthologie de la Nouvelle Poésie Nègre et Malgache de langue française*, ed. by Léopold Senghor, (Paris: PUF, 1948), p.11.

¹⁹⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, preface to *Les Damnés de la Terre* by Franz Fanon, (Paris: Maspero, 1961).

jusque-là “objets” de l'autoritarisme capitaliste deviennent, fût-ce pour un moment, les sujets de leur histoire.¹⁹⁸

Still, at the end of his life, Sartre came to the conclusion that only the intention of the revolution could be radical and that terrorism in itself had to be denounced.¹⁹⁹ His ultimate goal was still to encourage individual responsibility for the common good.²⁰⁰ Despite his successive changes of position on the purpose of literature, language and violence, he considered his entire work as a necessary process. He recognized that some of his books could not be described as *littérature engagée* on their own, such as his autobiography *Les Mots*, but for Sartre ‘l’engagement, c’est l’oeuvre dans son ensemble.’²⁰¹

Sartre’s plays: targeting *le petit bourgeois*

In interviews by John Gerassi between 1970 and 1974, Sartre explained that although his work was made up of ideas, he had to test them in concrete situations, hence his plays.²⁰² He considered plays to be a minor genre compared to literature.²⁰³ He told Simone de Beauvoir in an *entretien* in 1974 that he became a playwright during his captivity, when he was part of a group of artists who organized plays every Sunday in a hangar. Sartre claimed that as he was a writer, this group had asked him to write a play for Christmas: *Bariona* would be his first *pièce engagée*. Sartre confirmed to Beauvoir that although the setting of the play was in Palestine, occupied by Romans, he was referring to France, occupied by Nazi Germany.²⁰⁴ Sartre first play in a theatre, *Les Mouches*, in June 1943, also used Greek tragedy to denounce indirectly the occupying forces and echoed his

¹⁹⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, preface to *Les Maos en France*, Michèle Manceaux (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), p.44.

¹⁹⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘L’Espoir maintenant II’, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 17 March 1980.

²⁰⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Cahiers pour une morale*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), p.55.

²⁰¹ Sartre, ‘Entretiens’, in Simone de Beauvoir, *La Cérémonie des adieux*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), p.274.

²⁰² Jean-Paul Sartre, interviewed by John Gerassi between 1970 and 1974, *Talking with Sartre – Conversations and Debates*, Yale University Press, 2009, p.79.

²⁰³ Anna Boschetti, *Sartre et Les Temps modernes*, (Paris: Editions de minuit, 1985), p.77.

²⁰⁴ Sartre, ‘Entretiens’, in Simone de Beauvoir, *La Cérémonie des adieux*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), p.237.

existentialist essay *L'Être et le Néant*, published the same year: 'Dans *Les Mouches*, je voulais parler de la liberté, de ma liberté absolue, ma liberté d'homme, et surtout de la liberté des Français occupés devant les Allemands.'²⁰⁵ The character of Orestes was meant to symbolize Resistance, while his mother and her lover represented the Germans. And yet, French critics did not understand the underlying message and *Les Mouches* closed just after three weeks. In terms of effectiveness, Sartre claimed that the play was not a complete failure:

'The German critics certainly got it. The *Pariser Zeitung*, which was published in Paris in German for the occupying forces, said that *The Flies* was a good play but obviously entirely against us.'²⁰⁶

When Gerassi asked Sartre to characterise the type of audience of his plays, Sartre admitted that the *bourgeoisie* – or "*bourgeoisie bien-pensante*" in the words of Ingrid Galster²⁰⁷ – mainly attended his plays, but Sartre relied on the *petit bourgeois*, who, he believed, was closer to the masses than the regular *bourgeoisie*, to relay his message of existentialism and resistance.²⁰⁸ He was aware that his position of playwright under the Occupation was a contradiction to his other commitments:

On the one hand I was working with the communists. On the other I was writing stuff for *Combat*, headed by Camus, who hated the communists. In the third place I had to ask the German censors to approve my plays, two of them, *No Exit* and *The Flies*, which I hoped would communicate to their audiences that honour and integrity demand resistance to the Germans, no matter what the consequences.²⁰⁹

Sartre's work with the Communists soon faced limitations when he launched another play, *Les Mains sales*, in April 1948, which was perceived as anti-communist because it illustrated the disillusionment about Communism during the Cold War. As a result, the Communists rejected Sartre, but only temporarily. In an interview for Radio Télévision Suisse on 29th June 1960, Sartre showed that he was aware he could not reach the working class with his plays, but he blamed the location of theaters, not his plays :

²⁰⁵ Ibid, p.238.

²⁰⁶ Sartre, interviewed by John Gerassi between 1970 and 1974, *Talking with Sartre – Conversations and Debates*, Yale University Press, 2009,p.108.

²⁰⁷ Ingrid Galster, *Le Théâtre de Jean-Paul Sartre devant ses premiers critiques*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), p.109.

²⁰⁸ Sartre, interviewed by John Gerassi, p.111.

²⁰⁹ Sartre, interviewed by John Gerassi, p.108.

Le théâtre populaire se définit par son public, c'est-à-dire au lieu d'être un théâtre pour public bourgeois, il atteint toutes les couches de la société, y compris les couches travailleuses, les ouvriers [...] C'est un théâtre en somme qui devrait avoir un intérêt pour tous et trouver un centre de réunion pour tous. [...] malheureusement il [le public ouvrier] ne vient pas, peut-être à cause de la pièce elle-même, non pas à cause de son contenu, mais surtout parce que les théâtres parisiens sont dans les quartiers bourgeois [...] ²¹⁰

He abandoned the dramatic art after *Les Séquestrés d'Altona* in 1959, as he thought one had to be young to write plays in order to convey a certain sense of urgency and dynamism.²¹¹ In any case, his plays – or any other plays for that matter – were not the medium that would allow him to reach the masses.

Press: from *Les temps modernes* to *Libération*

His main tool to democratise literature would be his review *Les Temps modernes* whose first issue was published in October 1945. In its golden age in the 1960s, the review had more than 20,000 readers – and around 3,000 today ²¹² - but these numbers would never compete with the sales of *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde* and *Paris Match*. As explained in Chapter two, the readership of intellectual reviews and newspapers would also progressively decline because of the growing importance of audio-visual media. In the presentation of *Les Temps Modernes*, Sartre seized the opportunity to reject the idea of atemporal morality:

Nous ne souhaitons pas gagner notre procès en appel et nous n'avons que faire d'une réhabilitation posthume: c'est ici même et de notre vivant que les procès se gagnent ou se perdent.²¹³

Here, Sartre seemed determined to act in the present – *en situation dans son époque* in his own words – but in the hope of a proletarian revolution led by Marxism,

²¹⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, interviewed by Maurice Huelin about his plays, on Radio Télévision Suisse, 29th June 1960.

²¹¹ Sartre, 'Entretiens', in Simone de Beauvoir, *La Cérémonie des adieux*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), p.208.

²¹² Michel Contat, 'La littérature au service du présent', *Le Monde*, 27 January 2010 <http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2010/07/21/la-litterature-au-service-du-present_1390572_3232.html> [accessed 1 October 2016]

²¹³ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Présentation des *Temps Modernes*' (1945), in *Situations II*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p.15.

he would soon tolerate crimes carried out by the Soviet Union until 1956, ignoring the present for a supposedly better future.

In *Sartre and the media*, Michael Scriven describes Sartre's "refusal to become the mouthpiece of any publication which would in any way have limited his freedom of expression".²¹⁴ Freedom was indeed absolute in the eyes of the existentialist. However, Sartre's choices to write both for the Establishment – the conservative newspaper *Le Figaro*, the populist *France-Soir*, the left-of-centre *L'Express* – and then for the revolutionary alternative – the pro-communist *Libération* and four pro-Maoist newspapers *La Cause du peuple*, *Tout!*, *J'accuse* and *La Parole au peuple* – also reveal the progressive radicalization of his *engagement* and at the same time, the decline of his popularity. From January to March 1945, Sartre was even a correspondent for *Le Figaro* in New York, invited by the State Department. He wrote about ten articles there, including an article on 25th January titled "Victoire du Gaullisme":

[...] la reconnaissance du Gouvernement Provisoire est un succès pour le libéralisme et, du même coup, ce succès des libéraux assure que la France petite-bourgeoise des Giraud et des Pétain est reléguée au magasin des accessoires.²¹⁵

Sartre was not anti-Gaullist yet. He was defending de Gaulle against Giroud's supporters among the American administration and French expatriates. Interestingly, the article is not included in *Situations III*, in 1949, but his other articles written in New York are. Sartre would write against de Gaulle the year the latter became Prime Minister, in 1958. In *L'Express* this time, Sartre wrote "Le Prétendant" on 22nd May in which he depicted de Gaulle as a dictator, and "La Constitution du mépris" on 11th September in which he rejects the Constitution of the 5th Republic and portrays de Gaulle as a monarch. And still, the new Constitution was adopted by referendum on 28th September with almost 80% of votes in favour. Sartre's articles had no impact on the French's vote.

²¹⁴ Michael Scriven, *Sartre and the media*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1993), p.24.

²¹⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Victoire du Gaullisme', *Le Figaro*, 25th January 1945, < <http://www.lefigaro.fr/histoire/archives/2015/01/25/26010-20150125ARTFIG00056-sartre-la-franceune-democratie-de-combat.php> >, [accessed 12 August 2017]

Sartre published fewer and fewer articles in mainstream newspapers from 1960, the year of the radicalization of his *engagement*. This is the year he wrote a letter in support of the Jeanson Network and signed the “Manifeste des 121”, the declaration on the right to insubordination in the Algerian War. He would also reject the Establishment by refusing the Nobel Prize for literature in 1964 and hosting the Russell Tribunal in Stockholm in 1967 when de Gaulle refused to allow a session in France.

May 68 would trigger the rebirth of *La Cause du Peuple*, the newspaper originally founded by George Sand in 1848. Roland Castro turned it into a Maoist newspaper on 1st May 1968. The newspaper made Sartre realise the importance of a brutally simple language, the language used by protesters themselves: “Plutôt la vie”, “La beauté est dans la rue”, “Je vote, tu votes, il vote, nous votons, vous votez, ils profitent”, etc. Its objective was to convey the voice of the working class. Sartre became the newspaper’s editor in April 1970 and was even arrested in June with Beauvoir for selling it on the streets of Paris and for encouraging strike actions, social movements, and occupation of factories. From this newspaper would emerge the daily newspaper *Libération* founded by Serge July and Jean-Paul Sartre. When he took part in the creation of *Libération* in 1973, Sartre stopped working on *L’Idiot de la famille*, a biography on Flaubert which would have been read by his bourgeois readership, to dedicate himself to a newspaper that had no hierarchy at the time and whose staff received the same salary. This newspaper was created so that workers and intellectuals could communicate. Therefore Sartre believed that his newspaper was more directly democratic than *L’Humanité*, which was very close to the PCF. The launch of *Libération* in February 1973 almost coincided with Sartre’s blindness in April of that year. Therefore, he was only able to give interviews and his role of editor from February 1973 to May 1974 was only symbolic. In fact, he was a co-editor with Jean-Claude Vernier.

Sartre’s intervention in the press went from “l’engagement ne doit, en aucun cas, faire oublier la littérature” in the presentation of his review *Les Temps modernes* to his withdrawal from literature during the launch of *Libération*, as he confessed in his Radioscopie interview on 7th February 1973 “J’abandonne la littérature et la philosophie pendant six mois.” This evolution from the dominant author in charge of his very successful review to the editor of a newspaper exhorting its readers to speak

up (“Peuple, prends la parole et garde-la!”) is also visible in the focus of my next section, the interviews given by Sartre in the newspapers and on the radio.

Interviews in the press and on the radio: bridging the writer function and the intellectual function

As Sartre progressively placed man at the centre of his literature and activism, he also democratized the conduct of his interviews until they took the more open shape of a dialogue.

One of the earliest interviews of Sartre that can be found appeared in *La Revue Juive de Genève* in 1947, but dated back to the summer of 1939. Sartre had published a short story ‘L’enfance d’un chef’ and a novel *La nausée* in 1938. He knew his interviewer Arnold Mandel, with whom he had debates on Jewish identity. When giving this interview, Sartre is 34 years old, but already incarnates the prophetic intellectual whose political interventions go beyond his expertise: ‘Generally speaking, I refuse to see anything lasting in Nazism. It is an eruptive and temporary outbreak. I don’t believe in the advent of the “Nazi man”.’²¹⁶ The published version of this interview only shows two questions asked by the interviewer, “What do you think about anti-Semitism?” and “What is your opinion about the Jewish contribution to culture and civilization, as a whole?” The rest consists of Sartre’s long answers punctuated with first-person opinion phrases, or at least this is how they were reported. *Marianne* also published an interview-article by Claudine Chonez on 23 November 1938, entitled ‘Jean-Paul Sartre, romancier philosophe’, in which the journalist tried to explain phenomenology and sum up *La nausée*. Often in the articles-interviews, Sartre’s remarks were not quoted directly, bearing the risk of misinterpretation of his ideas.

The genre of the interview would develop after 1945 with the expansion of the media. At this stage and until 1964 when Sartre refused to accept the Nobel Prize, he would be interviewed to discuss existentialism (‘A la recherche de l’existentialisme: M. Jean-Paul Sartre s’explique’, interviewed by Jean Duché, *Le littéraire*, 13th April 1946) or the release of one of his novels, philosophical essays or plays (‘Jean-Paul

²¹⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, [interview on the Jewish question], *La Revue juive de Genève*, 6-7 (1947), 212-13, translated in English in Michel Rybalka, ‘Publication & Reception of Anti-Semite & Jew’, *October*, 87 (1999), 173.

Sartre va faire ses débuts de metteur en scène avec *La Putain respectueuse*, interviewed by Jacques Marcerou, *Libération*, 30th October 1946). His interviews had the function of promotion when announcing an upcoming publication, but also that of explanation, providing further information for the good comprehension of his books. Titles such as ‘Sartre nous parle de...’ were quite common and demonstrate the complete lack of reciprocity between the interviewer and Sartre. Journalists were “lectured” by Sartre.

After 1964, interviewing Sartre became the event itself (‘Sartre nous explique son refus’, interviewed by N. L. Kemski, *Paris-Presse-L'Intransigeant*, 24 October 1964). More foreign newspapers looked to interview him and glossy magazines, like American *Vogue*, turned him into a celebrity by revealing his private life:

The miracle of Simone de Beauvoir is that she has the intelligence of a man and the sensitivity of a woman. In other words, she is everything I could want.²¹⁷

Sartre had already been published in *Vogue* in 1945, “The New Writing in France: The Resistance “taught that literature is no fancy activity independent of politics” and in 1946, “Portraits de Paris”,²¹⁸ but at the time the focus was on the existentialist “style”, brought to America by fashion magazines.

On 15 August 1967, Sartre gave an interview on Radio Canada during which he was asked to define his status of intellectual and his role in the Russell Tribunal, the International War Crimes Tribunal organised by British philosopher Bertrand Russell. His reply was a typical example of ‘universalité singulière’, in the sense that he acknowledged the fact that most of the committee members were Nobel Prize winners – and this is what constitutes their singularity – but he believed they were still ordinary human beings who faced the same history and shared the same universal values. According to him, this contradiction gave the committee the legitimacy to make decisions in the name of all men:

Être n’importe qui n’est pas seulement une réalité, c’est aussi une tâche, c’est-à-dire refuser tous les traits distinctifs pour pouvoir parler au nom de tout le

²¹⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘Sartre talks of Beauvoir’, interviewed by Madeleine Gobeil, *Vogue* 146, 1965, p.72-3

²¹⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘The New Writing in France: the Resistance “taught that literature is no fancy activity independent of politics”, *Vogue* 105, July 1945, p.85. ‘Portrait of Paris’, *Vogue* 107, June 1946, p.152-162.

monde. On ne peut parler au nom de tout le monde que si l'on est tout le monde.²¹⁹

He explained that “being a nobody” allowed him and the rest of the committee to make a more legal judgement than an official tribunal that would deliver a sentence by force, and reiterated the idea that intellectuals had no power nor force. Even if Sartre spent the interview highlighting his ordinariness, his participation to the Russell Tribunal is another reason why he was perceived as the *total intellectual*.²²⁰ May 68 marked a turning point in Sartre’s approach to the interview protocol. He engaged in conversations in which the interviewers were on an equal footing with him and received more speaking time. He gave his support to the students on a peripheral radio called Radio-Télévision Luxembourg. His reluctance to speak on the ORTF is also consistent with his decision to work with Maoist newspapers at the same time, as explained in the previous section of this chapter. National newspapers, under government pressure, were not necessarily reporting the May 68 events. His conversation ‘L’Imagination au pouvoir’ with Daniel Cohn-Bendit, the student leader during the May events, was reported on 20th May in *Le Nouvel Observateur* though, as an ‘interview’ of Cohn-Bendit by Sartre because Sartre was asking questions. However, Sartre had much more speaking time than a classic interviewer, he was able to express a judgement and advise his interlocutor:

Quelque chose est sorti de vous, qui étonne, qui bouscule, qui renie tout ce qui a fait de notre société ce qu'elle est aujourd'hui. C'est ce que j'appellerai l'extension du champ des possibles. N'y renoncez pas.²²¹

This new interaction coincided with Sartre’s new definition of the intellectual “among the masses”. He no longer wanted to be the people’s spokesman; he wanted the people to speak (‘Jean-Paul Sartre fait parler « les casseurs »’, *Le Nouvel observateur*, n° 288, 18 May 1970). Sartre also accepted to give an interview on France Inter’s *Radioscopie* on 7th February 1973. His only objective was to promote the launch of *Libération*. The interviewer, Jacques Chancel, was asking him

²¹⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, interviewed on *Radio Canada* by Madeleine Gobeil and Claude Lanzmann, 15th August 1967.

²²⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of art: genesis and structure of the literary field*, (Stanford University Press, 1996), p.209.

²²¹ Jean-Paul Sartre and Daniel Cohn Bendit, ‘L’Imagination au pouvoir’, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 20 May 1968.

questions about his childhood, his father's absence, his preferred moments to write, his evolution from existentialism to Marxism, etc. when Sartre interrupted him:

Pour l'instant tout ce dont nous parlons me paraît un petit peu vieux, un petit peu lointain. [...] Ce qui m'intéresse actuellement, c'est que par la politique, je suis arrivé, avec des camarades, à essayer de faire un quotidien. [...] Nous ne concevons pas l'information comme la plupart des quotidiens français. Nous voulons d'abord qu'il n'y ait aucune chance d'agir sur nous, de faire des pressions.²²²

Sartre explained that *Libération* would not feature any advertising and would be financed by the people, who were donating around 5,000 francs per day. The conversation between Chancel and Sartre seemed tense, as Sartre was clearly mistrustful of the ORTF, which he opposed to his newspaper. He claimed that *Libération* did not belong to any political party, that they believed in direct democracy and that it was the only way for the people to speak to the people. They wanted to create *Libération* committees that would locally collate information. Sartre's only objective when granting the ORTF this interview was to use one medium he despised to serve his own medium.

With the aggravation of his health problems from 1973 onwards, dialogues with the Maoists Victor and Gavi became more and more common. The limits of these dialogues were less rigid than those of an interview for a magazine. This also coincides with his promotion of a more dialectical kind of dialogue between intellectuals in *Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels*. The objective of these dialogues was to define Leftist thought after 1968. Their conversations would be gathered in *On a raison de se révolter* in 1974. The case study on Stéphane Hessel will reveal that Hessel also published a series of conversations with the younger generation of intellectuals at the end of his life. Sartre also needed to explain the Maoists' illegal actions to the public and where he personally stood. However, he showed limited agency at times: discussion topics were decided by others; his answers seemed directed and influenced. According to Simone de Beauvoir, Sartre's final aspiration to formulate a collective thought was not just motivated by his worsening condition:

Pour l'instant, il travaillait avec Victor à un dialogue sur le sens et les raisons de leur collaboration, dialogue qui parut dans *Libération* le 6 janvier 1977.

²²² Jean-Paul Sartre, interviewed by Jacques Chancel, on *Radioscopie*, France Inter, 7th February 1973.

Il précisait que la forme nouvelle de son futur livre *Pouvoir et Liberté* n'était pas due seulement à ses infirmités, mais qu'il souhaitait profondément que s'y manifestât un *nous*. Ce livre, c'était pour lui "la morale et la politique que je voudrais avoir terminées à la fin de ma vie".²²³

Sartre went so far as to say that Pierre Victor was the only person who could take over his work as an intellectual and activist,²²⁴ but Simone de Beauvoir doubted Victor's intellectual honesty. She claimed that behind their "*pensée plurielle*" was nothing but Victor's opinions.²²⁵ Sartre's attempt to open his thoughts to the young generation occurred too late to be really fruitful. A real transmission could have made the intellectual stage less daunting after Sartre's death.

TV and cinema: the central place of the viewer

In parallel with his willingness to build a "*pensée plurielle*" through dialogues with the new generation of intellectuals, Sartre also demonstrated a desire to work more collectively on cinema and television projects.

Sartre wrote his first screenplay, *Les Jeux sont faits*, in 1943, at a time when he was also writing the play *Huis Clos*. They present some similarities as they both take place in the afterlife and explore existentialist themes, but *Les Jeux sont faits* never received as much attention as *Huis Clos*, even if it was adapted for the screen in 1947. What exactly brought Sartre to write screenplays? In an interview published on 15th April 1947 in *Combat*, Jean Delannoy, who directed the film *Les Jeux sont faits* in 1947, explained that he had initiated Sartre's script-writing career: 'Découragé par la médiocrité des scénarios que nous recevions chaque jour chez Pathé, j'ai été voir Sartre et lui ai demandé s'il ne voulait pas travailler pour nous.'²²⁶ Sartre ended up writing several scripts for Pathé between 1943 and 1947, such as *Typhus*, *Les Faux Nez* and *L'Engrenage*, but the exact figure is unknown. Although *Les Jeux sont faits* illustrates the necessity of self-determination and freedom, Sartre denied in an interview in 1947 that the script was existentialist and preferred calling it deterministic, in the sense that we are condemned to follow our own choices and

²²³ Beauvoir, *La Cérémonie des adieux*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), p.127.

²²⁴ Sartre, in Beauvoir, *La Cérémonie des adieux*, pp.140-41.

²²⁵ Beauvoir, *La Cérémonie des adieux*, p.150.

²²⁶ Jean Delannoy, interviewed in *Combat*, 15 April 1947, quoted in Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka, *Les écrits de Sartre*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), p.486.

accept our predestination. Sartre was also already able to see the potential in cinema: 'Le cinéma offre un horizon beaucoup plus large [que le théâtre]. Il présente l'avantage de la simultanéité des images.'²²⁷ That same year, Sartre published *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* in *Les Temps Modernes*, in which he distinguished between prose – committed writing – and poetry – literature as an intrinsically linguistic object. In this essay, he also explained why he had been writing screenplays:

Donc recourir à de nouveaux moyens: ils existent déjà; déjà les Américains les ont décorés du nom de 'mass media'; ce sont les vraies ressources dont nous disposons pour conquérir le public virtuel; journal, radio, cinéma. Naturellement il faut que nous fassions taire nos scrupules: bien sûr le livre est la forme la plus noble, la plus antique, bien sûr, il faudra toujours y revenir, mais il y a un art 'littéraire' de la T.S.F. et du film, de l'éditorial et du reportage! [...] Il faut apprendre à parler en images, à transposer les idées de nos livres dans de nouveaux langages.

Il ne s'agit pas du tout de laisser adapter nos oeuvres à l'écran ou pour les missions de Radio-France: il faut écrire directement pour le cinéma, pour les ondes...²²⁸

Therefore for Sartre, writing for the cinema did not mean abandoning literature. His acknowledgement of the complementarity between literature and mass media as early as 1947 is certainly innovative. And yet, with the exceptions of his script for *Les Orgueilleux*, the 1953 Franco-Mexican film, and *Le Scénario Freud*, discovered in his papers after his death, Sartre would stop writing screenplays, perhaps for the same reason that he had stopped writing plays. As explained earlier, for Sartre, a playwright could only be young in order to convey a sense of urgency; therefore one can imagine that he had the same point of view about the screenwriter. In fact, Sartre's next contribution to the cinema would be in 1976, with the three-hour-and-ten-minute documentary by Alexandre Astruc and Michel Contat, *Sartre par lui-même*. This time, he was in front of the camera, in the study of his Montparnasse flat, with Beauvoir and several other friends, answering the directors' questions. The documentary had been shot mainly in 1972, before Sartre's health started to deteriorate sharply. The voice-over explained in the first minutes of the documentary the reason for Sartre's appearance on camera:

²²⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Les Jeux sont faits? Tout le contraire d'une pièce existentialiste, nous dit J.P. Sartre', interviewed by Paul Carrière, *Le Figaro*, 29 April 1947, p.4.

²²⁸ Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, p.266.

Pour la première fois, il acceptait de s'expliquer devant une caméra afin de faire comprendre à un public plus large que celui de ses lecteurs la logique de son itinéraire d'intellectuel. Une vedette qui se montre, ça peut intéresser les producteurs de cinéma; un intellectuel qui s'explique, beaucoup moins. "Sartre n'est pas un bon produit", décrétèrent cette année-là les gens qui décident de ce que le public souhaite voir. Il a fallu quatre ans pour que ce film puisse enfin voir le jour.

Why had Sartre chosen this moment to explain himself on camera? He had already written his autobiography *Les Mots* in 1963, so why recount his life now? The radicalization of his *engagement* was reaching its peak. He had been supporting the Maoists as he could, but the rise in violence in their protest actions needed explaining. In fact, a few days before filming, Pierre Overney, a Maoist activist who had been made redundant by Renault, was killed on 25th February 1972 by a Renault security guard as he was trying to enter the factory with a group of Maoists. Therefore, the filming is tinged with both the solemnity of the social context and the complicity between Sartre and his close friends.

Sartre would soon start working on another project that would allow him to recount twentieth-century History, as he had experienced it: the preparation of ten television episodes for Antenne 2 between October 1974 and September 1975. Simone de Beauvoir explained in *La Cérémonie des Adieux* that Sartre had so far been reluctant to work with the television sphere:

[...] jusqu'alors, à une ou deux exceptions près, il avait refusé toute participation personnelle à la télévision, pour ne pas cautionner un organisme d'Etat. (Il avait pris cette résolution au moment des grèves de la télévision et de la radio.)²²⁹

Several factors might have influenced Sartre's decision to give television a chance at this precise moment. The ORTF (Office de Radiodiffusion télévision française), which had been in charge since 1964 of providing public radio and television in France, would be dismantled in December 1974 following the 7th August 1974 law. It was the end of the Gaullist model of state television and Sartre was willing to trust the new President of France, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, even if the State monopoly remained in place. Seven institutions would be created, Télévision Française 1 (TF1), Antenne 2, France Région 3 (FR3), Télé Diffusion Française (TDF), Société Française de Production (SFP), Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA) and Radio

²²⁹ Beauvoir, *La Cérémonie des adieux*, p.99.

France, all under the supervision of the Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac. The writer and producer Marcel Jullian was nominated by the Council of Ministers as the director of Antenne 2 and approached Sartre with a one-hour television project on his life and work, “Un intellectuel face au peuple”. Simone de Beauvoir recalled how Sartre came up with a counter-offer:

[...] en discutant avec Victor et Gavi, il lui vint l'idée de produire des émissions sur l'histoire de ce siècle, telle qu'il l'avait vécue ou côtoyée depuis sa naissance. J'étais d'accord. Il espérait agir sur le public en renouvelant profondément la vision de notre récente histoire; Marcel Jullian, président-directeur d'Antenne 2, semblait voir ce projet avec faveur: ainsi la télévision giscardienne prouverait-elle qu'elle se libéralisait.²³⁰

This project had been born out of a discussion with the young Maoists; although it is not known how much input they had in the initial idea. It is interesting to note that the first episode would not quite start at the very beginning of the 20th century, but in 1905, year of Sartre's birth. The film director and sociologist Nadja Ringart, who was working on the project with other feminists, remembers the first page of the scenario she received from Sartre:

Sur la première page du scénario, deux dates et un titre: “1905-1917 – Du trouble social à la révolution d'octobre, en passant par la guerre”. Tout commence en 1905 et le texte précise: “Naissance de Jean-Paul Sartre. Ce début, très bref, visera à souligner de manière frappante cette “contingence”: la naissance de Sartre” [...] Le scénario initial précise qu'il faut “bien faire sentir le monde fermé de l'enfance de Sartre, typique, au reste, d'une vision de petit-bourgeois français [...]”²³¹

This project may have been about History, but it seems Sartre envisaged it as a last opportunity to connect with the masses and to make sure that his life choices had been understood. There would definitely be a sense of urgency surrounding the preparation of these episodes as he had stopped reading and writing since 1973 and his health was not getting any better. In 1967, Guy Debord had raised the alarm about consumer society and mass media in *La Société du Spectacle*, denouncing cultural homogenization and a culture of appearances. However, after 1968, television was the main platform to restore the intellectuals' public role: ‘La

²³⁰ Beauvoir, *La Cérémonie des adieux*, p.99.

²³¹ Nadja Ringart, 'Scénario pour un film condamné', *Les Temps Modernes*, 647-648 (2008), 93-95.

nouveauté du support et surtout la possibilité de s'adresser à un très large public semblent compenser le manque de légitimité intellectuelle du média.²³² Gavi, Victor, Beauvoir and Sartre had decided that each episode would last 75 minutes and would be followed by a 15-minute sequence on current affairs linked with the main topic. Even if they drafted the synopsis, they would need the help of historians – young Maoists and feminists mainly – to develop each topic. In fact, these 50 historians were producing so many materials that books would accompany the release of each episode. This collective enterprise was starting to show its limits: no contract had been signed with Antenne 2 yet, therefore money was becoming a problem and the historians were concerned that the quartet could possibly reap the benefits of their research. Sartre tried to appease their fears:

Ils ne voulaient pas se borner à rassembler des documents dont d'autres tireraient des conclusions théoriques. Sartre chercha à les convaincre que le but visé étant une oeuvre "esthétique-idéologique", celle-ci exigeait une synthèse que seul un groupe très restreint pouvait accomplir.²³³

Sartre, Beauvoir and all the "historians" working for them on the project seemed to be writing a philosophical essay. Instead of deciding on actual images and content to fit into the concise format chosen, they seemed engaged in never-ending research on a wide variety of topics: immigrants, farmers, small shopkeepers, criticism of familialism, regionalism etc... When Daniel Cohn-Bendit was unable to testify for the episode on May 68 as he was persona non grata in France, he asked his friend Barbara Koster to go to France and speak on his behalf, but she was faced with a disorganized and amateur group:

Lorsqu'elle arrive aux réunions, elle s'effare de voir un projet d'émission de télévision se construire avec plus de thèses et de concepts que d'images, et surtout elle trouve les concepts en question bien désuets.²³⁴

The project couldn't be categorized: it was not a drama, nor a documentary. It looked unlikely to gain the loyalty of viewers and its interpretation of History would infuriate the party in power. When the scripts of the ten episodes were finalized and sent to

²³² Isabelle Veyrat-Masson, *Quand la télévision explore le temps – L'histoire au petit écran*, (Paris: Fayard, 2000), p.283.

²³³ Beauvoir, *La Cérémonie des adieux*, pp.104-105.

²³⁴ Nadja Ringart, 'Scénario pour un film condamné', p.103.

Antenne 2, they actually reached the Ministry of the Interior before Jullian's desk and were rejected. On the 24th September 1975, Sartre organized a press conference to officialize his disillusionment and break with television:

Je n'aimais pas auparavant la télévision, mais j'avais décidé de changer d'avis avec M. Jullian. Maintenant, j'ai vu que la proposition qui m'avait été faite était absurde. Alors, je dis adieu à la télévision. [...] On a dit: Sartre renonce. Non. On m'y fait renoncer, c'est un cas de censure formelle et non directe.²³⁵

Still, this failure did not signal the end of literary programmes on Antenne 2. As explained in Chapter Two, Jullian would welcome the weekly talk-show "Apostrophes", hosted and created by Bernard Pivot, between 1975 and 1990. The episode of the 23rd April 1976 "L'influence de la télévision sur le public et du public sur la télévision" recognized the central place of the viewer, a realization that Sartre had certainly missed when working on his historical and biographical television project.

Activism: *Le manuel-intellectuel*

Sartre's existentialism and his redefinition of the written word as a liberating medium for the people transformed the role of the intellectual. He is also often pictured as an activist standing on a barrel while addressing the workers of Renault Boulogne-Billancourt, or shaking hands with Raymond Aron on the steps of the Elysée Palace to support the cause of the Vietnamese boat people. What forms did his activism take? To what extent was it efficient? His activism started at the Liberation, although he claimed that he was part of a resistance group in charge of propaganda during the Second World War and that his plays denounced the occupier. Sudhir Hazareesingh explained in *How the French think* (2015) that not only did Sartre create a new type of intellectual, he also gave French society an impetus after the War:

His version of existentialism provided his countrymen with a means of coming to terms with the trauma and humiliation of the war years, notably by stressing

²³⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, quoted in Isabelle Veyrat-Masson, *Quand la télévision explore le temps – L'histoire au petit écran*, (Paris: Fayard, 2000), p.287.

the collective heroism of the French people and the individual's capacity to make a clean break with the past.²³⁶

Certainly this period constituted a “clean break” for Sartre too who now had the chance to explain his degree of involvement in the French Resistance: ‘Yes, I joined the resistance, in a way, by writing, since with my eyes I could not do otherwise. But I was still an individual.’²³⁷ After insisting on his limited power as an individual during the War, he would usually stress the ability of the French people to stand up together against “American imperialism” after the War.²³⁸

Sartre's most visible activism in political causes, after his involvement in the RDR in 1948-49, would be the Algerian War. The War started in November 1954 but Sartre wrote his first article on the War in March 1956 in *Les Temps Modernes*, “Le colonialisme est un système”. As explained in Chapter Two, his decision to write on the War had been triggered by the National Assembly's vote to give special powers to Guy Mollet's government in March 1956. It is interesting to note that he took part in a collective response before engaging himself publicly as an individual. His journal *Les Temps Modernes* had released a first issue on the Algerian War in May 1955 and the *Comité d'Action contre la poursuite de la guerre en Afrique du Nord* that he joined had been founded in November 1955. Sartre's central interest moved from the proletariat to Algeria and it is worth highlighting the fact that this shift happened before the invasion of Budapest in November 1956. Therefore, the study of his modes of action at this particular moment in history reveals that despite the rarity of his interviews between 1956 and 1958 owing to the questioning of communism, Sartre remained politically active on the Algerian front, through other forms.

Sartre would become the “pétitionnaire de service”. *Le Monde* published 9 petitions signed by Sartre in 1959, 18 in 1960 and 10 in 1961.²³⁹ The War of Manifestos took place in autumn 1960, opposing the intellectuals in favour of the independence of Algeria and those against it. It started with the *Déclaration sur le droit à l'insoumission dans la guerre d'Algérie*, published in *Vérité-Liberté* in September 1960 and also known as the *Manifeste des 121*, signed by Sartre. This was seen as

²³⁶ Sudhir Hazareesingh, *How the French think: An Affectionate Portrait of an Intellectual People*, (London: Allen Lane, 2015), p.234.

²³⁷ Sartre, in John Gerassi, *Talking with Sartre – Conversations and Debates*, interviewed by John Gerassi between 1970 and 1974, (Yale University Press, 2009), p.78.

²³⁸ Sartre, interviewed by John Gerassi, p.105.

²³⁹ Jean-Pierre Rioux, *La Guerre d'Algérie et les Français*, (Paris: Fayard, 1990), p.124.

an act of betrayal by 185 intellectuals who signed in October 1960 the *Manifeste des intellectuels français pour la résistance à l'abandon*. A contradiction lies in the fact that Sartre kept on signing petitions and manifestos despite rejecting the model of classic intellectual. As explained by Rémy Reffiel, petitions were the antithesis of the democratization of *engagement*:

Entre la liste qui énumère les signataires par ordre alphabétique, celle qui se contente de les mentionner par ordre d'arrivée ou celle qui joue sur leur prestige, les différences sont de taille. Elles manifestent le travail de démocratisation apparente ou la volonté d'élitisme affichés par les initiateurs de la pétition qui ont procédé à une quête orientée des signataires potentiels.²⁴⁰

Stefan Collini also wrote on the fragility of a petition: it requires numbers and selectiveness at the same time²⁴¹. Jean-François Sirinelli even described this process as aristocratic and pressurizing: 'Mais, de la solidarité, on glisse insensiblement aux pressions morales qui peuvent s'exercer et de là, à des raisons moins pures, le conformisme, parfois, la crainte aussi de décevoir ou de se singulariser.'²⁴² Sartre fought so much to remain an independent thinker that this choice of form seems counter-productive with hindsight. According to Roland Dumas, his defence lawyer during the trial in September 1960 of 20 members of Jeanson's network who had helped the FLN, Sartre had had so many missed opportunities to be recognized on the political scene in the past that it encouraged his intellectual involvement in the Algerian War:

La guerre d'Algérie, ce fut sa guerre. Au fond, Sartre est passé à côté de la guerre d'Espagne, à côté du Front Populaire. La Résistance? Oui mais si peu. [...] Il aura donc manqué tous les grands événements politiques de son temps, sauf celui-là, la guerre d'Algérie. Qui fut, en quelque sorte, la rencontre d'une grande cause avec une grande personnalité.²⁴³

The impact of such petitions on the decisions of the government may be impossible to measure, but by signing petitions, Sartre was leaving a trace of his political position in history. The petitions that he signed constitute a testament to his

²⁴⁰ Rémy Riffiel, *La tribu des clercs: Les intellectuels sous la Vème République, 1958-1990* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy and CNRS editions, 1993), p.173.

²⁴¹ Collini, *Absent Minds*, p.264.

²⁴² Jean-François Sirinelli, *Intellectuels et passions françaises, Manifestes et pétitions au vingtième siècle*, (Paris : Fayard, 1990), p.323.

²⁴³ Roland Dumas, interviewed by Annie Cohen-Solal, in *Sartre*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), p.563.

participation in the public debate. No such written traces were left of his resistance during the Second World War. He had claimed that his plays had been implicitly written to condemn the occupier, but there was no explicit proof that he had been a resistant. His signature could now silence his detractors by proving that he had picked a side. His signature was in fact more important than the text of the petition: public opinion was more likely to remember that he had signed – his signature being at the top of the list if the list was not alphabetical – than to read the actual request. This establishes a hierarchy in the modes of action of the intellectual: underground action such as the production and distribution of propaganda or the writing of a play is not as valued as a categorical public stand, such as a signature on a petition. And yet, underground action and public action complement each other in the sense that the former, when proven and revealed to the public eye, legitimizes the latter. The next two case studies of this thesis will confirm this idea as Bernard-Henri Lévy, born in 1948, lacked underground action in order to break from his bourgeois image while Stéphane Hessel, born in 1917, benefited from his status as resistance hero. Régis Debray summed up incisively this generational and historical difference: ‘Un bachelier en 1914 était un tué en sursis. En 1940, un déporté en instance de départ. En 1960, un pétitionnaire en herbe.’²⁴⁴ However, Sartre did more than sign petitions during the Algerian War: he supported the FLN. When he declared himself “porteur de valise”, the Organisation Armée Secrète (OAS) – the right-wing extremist paramilitary organisation that carried out a campaign of terror against De Gaulle’s government and the FLN in order to prevent Algerian independence – blew up his flat twice and his journal *Les Temps Modernes* was seized five times. Although the risk incurred was now higher than when signing petitions, being the target of a terrorist attack placed Sartre right at the centre of the public arena.

May 68 would soon challenge his place and role in society. This period of civil unrest proved that man could make history: existentialism had prevailed over structuralism. Still, Sartre was relegated to the role of interviewer of the revolt and handed over to the youth. The classic intellectual, as the guardian of universal values and spokesperson of the masses, had definitely become anachronistic. Richard Wolin explained that Sartre was not immediately sold on the students’ cause: ‘As a political thinker, Sartre despite his commendable openness to student concerns, was

²⁴⁴ Régis Debray, *Les rendez-vous manqués*, (Paris: Le Seuil, 1975), p.86.

unable to overcome his residual *ouvriérisme*.²⁴⁵ Still, Sartre later admitted that students were claiming sovereignty, self-determination and the dismantling of rigid hierarchies. He lent his support to the student cause with Simone de Beauvoir, Jean Genet, Nathalie Sarraute and Marguerite Duras by creating a new writers' union, the Comité d'action étudiants-écrivains (CAEE). Marguerite Duras described how the intellectuals in the Comité had a very secondary role and had failed to attract the students' attention:

Une seule fois nous sommes soixante. C'est le 20 mai à la Sorbonne, dans une salle de la bibliothèque de philosophie. Il s'agit de l'assemblée constitutive du Comité d'Action Etudiants-Ecrivains. Quinze sont célèbres: écrivains, journalistes, étudiants, sociologues, chroniqueurs de la Télévision. Des résolutions sont votées à l'unanimité, un boycott de l'ORTF en particulier. Il y a de très nombreuses interventions. Les plus respectées sont celles des chroniqueurs de la Télévision.²⁴⁶

Television presenters already had a more prestigious aura than intellectuals. In order to compete with them and remain an interlocutor of the youth, Sartre had to become more visible. In the early 1970s, Sartre would gravitate towards Maoism and therefore live a political rebirth. The radicalization of his *engagement* materialized in demonstrations and occupations of factories. When I interviewed Jean-Pierre Barou, he confirmed that Sartre had entered the Renault factory several times:

Je l'ai accompagné deux ou trois fois à Billancourt. On est rentrés cachés dans une camionnette à Billancourt pour distribuer des tracts. On s'est fait virer par les vigiles.

The change in Sartre's modes of action accompanied his change of views on the role of intellectuals: they were no longer external to the masses. When addressing Renault workers on a barrel in 1970, he acknowledged the legacy of the 19th century intellectual:

Je veux témoigner dans la rue parce que je suis un intellectuel et que je pense que la liaison du peuple et des intellectuels qui existait au 19^{ème} siècle – pas toujours, mais qui a donné de très bons résultats – devrait être retrouvée

²⁴⁵ Wolin, *The Wind from the East*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010) p.192.

²⁴⁶ Marguerite Duras, in *C'était Marguerite Duras*, Volume 2, by Jean Vallier, (Paris: Fayard, 2010).

aujourd'hui. Il y a 50 ans que le peuple et les intellectuels sont séparés, il faut maintenant qu'ils ne fassent plus qu'un.²⁴⁷

Was Sartre referring to Emile Zola and the Dreyfusards? With the fall of the ideological currents of the 20th century, Sartre seemed to call for humanism and individual responsibility more than ever, but unlike Zola, he was doing so standing on a barrel, not sitting at a desk. Major intellectuals such as Sartre and Foucault would remain Maoist sympathizers until the mid-1970s. Mao's slogan "One must get down from one's horse in order to pluck the flowers" even encouraged 2000 to 3000 French students – among whom were the Maoists – to take part in the *Etabli* movement: they went to work in provincial factories and carried out investigations on the working class²⁴⁸. The student Maoists' dedication to physical work seems paradoxical since they were educated to become France's intellectual elite. In an interview for the New York Times Magazine in October 1971, Sartre reaffirmed that the leftist intellectual was bound to be an activist:

May 1968 happened...I understood that what the young were putting into question was not just capitalism, imperialism, the system, etc. but those of us who pretended to be against all that as well. We can say that from 1940 to 1968 I was a left-wing intellectual [un intellectuel de gauche] and from 1968 on I became a leftist intellectual [un intellectuel gauchiste]. The difference is one of action. A leftist intellectual is one who realizes that being an intellectual exempts him from nothing. He forsakes his privileges, or tries to, in actions.²⁴⁹

However, Sartre explained in 1974, in *On a raison de se révolter*, that this kind of Leftism was not to be found within the PCF, it was outside the Party. Indeed, he believed that the leftists in the Party were putting a brake on revolutionary actions. Therefore, a radical movement could only exist outside the Party. Hence, Maoism emerged as the next step in Sartre's self-questioning:

Le gauchisme, comme on disait alors, est apparu non plus comme la gauche du Parti, mais comme radicalement séparé de lui, donc comme autonome. Je me suis senti attiré par ce groupe qui se réclamait de la révolution chinoise – j'avais été en Chine en 55, à un certain moment de son développement – simplement, d'abord, parce qu'il représentait un mouvement à gauche du Parti

²⁴⁷ Sartre, in Beauvoir, *La Cérémonie des adieux*, p.23.

²⁴⁸ Wolin, *The Wind from the East*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), p.129.

²⁴⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, interviewed by John Gerassi, 'Sartre accuses the intellectuals of bad faith', *New York Times Magazine*, 17 October 1971, p.38.

Communiste, ce mouvement dont nous aurions eu besoin en 61 et qui n'existait pas encore. Mais les alliances se font à l'occasion d'évènements, et non simplement par attirance. C'est le danger où se trouvait *La Cause du Peuple* qui m'a fait exister pour eux. [...] On a travaillé davantage ensemble, et petit à petit, je me suis gauchi, en ce sens que le travail avec eux m'obligeait – sans qu'ils fassent la moindre pression sur moi – à me contester comme intellectuel. L'intellectuel en partie bourgeois, que le Parti Communiste acceptait sans le changer comme compagnon de route-potiche, ne pouvait pas travailler avec les maos sans découvrir ses contradictions et sans vouloir en sortir. Il ne fallait pas que l'intellectuel se prît pour un conducteur des peuples, mais qu'il regagne, au plus vite, la place qui l'attendait dans le peuple. Quant aux intellectuels futurs, à ceux qui ont 15 ou 18 ans aujourd'hui, je comprenais qu'il fallait qu'ils eussent un métier manuel. Le Parti Communiste, je vous l'ai dit, m'a débarrassé de ma névrose d'écrivain. Avec les maos, il fallait aller plus loin et contester l'intellectuel, voir en lui non pas un homme spécialement doué par la Nature mais un bénéficiaire, et une victime de la division du travail.²⁵⁰

In this same conversation with the Maoists, *On a raison de se révolter*, Sartre announced the advent of a new kind of intellectual:

Je pense que, si vous [les Maos] me remettez en question et que je me conteste pour être avec vous, j'ai dans la mesure de mes moyens à créer une société où il y aura encore des philosophes, des hommes d'un type nouveau, manuels-intellectuels, mais qui se poseront la question: qu'est-ce que l'homme?²⁵¹

After spending his career trying to give intellectuals and their literature a purpose, Sartre had reached the conclusion that the intellectual now had to help man achieve his potential. He would spend the last years of his life trying to offer “*une pensée plurielle*”, the dialogue between the new generation of intellectuals and himself.

This case study allowed us to highlight the successive forms of Sartre's *engagement*: he perpetually reinvented his modes of action. Andrew Leak has described how Sartre admired the fact that Gauguin, Van Gogh and Rimbaud had all made radical decisions in their career and then reappeared under a different guise:

Sartre was convinced that such decisions could not have been the result of reflection, but must have been taken spontaneously, in a violent revolution of the whole personality. And these are the alternatives that shape his thought in

²⁵⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *On a raison de se révolter*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), p.95-96.

²⁵¹ Sartre, *On a raison de se révolter*, p.103.

the *Carnets*: reflection or spontaneity; self-repetition or radical transformation.²⁵²

I have argued that Sartre was in search of authenticity when adopting each form of action one after the other: he was constantly looking for a way to fill the gap between his status as bourgeois intellectual and the masses. I have also brought to light the interdependence of forms in Sartre's work. His novels, philosophical essays and plays might have been read and watched mainly by the bourgeoisie but they gave him a certain aura that legitimized his interventions on the socio-political stage. Sartre sums up the intricacy of his modes of action as follows:

What I do for *La Cause* is exercise my profession as a writer. But *Flaubert* is a creative work, and its prestige guarantees that when I write about the outrages at the Toul prison, the world listens.²⁵³

Therefore, it would have been counterproductive for him to give up on writing literature to dedicate himself to activism. Sartre reached the conclusion that the new intellectuals would be the “manuels-intellectuels”, equally capable of writing, philosophizing, and engaging in activism. However, the next generation of intellectuals did not necessarily devote to all three tasks, or not in the same order. The next case study on Bernard-Henry Lévy shows that he acquired a certain ‘prestige’ and political influence without the recognition of his talent as a writer-philosopher by public opinion and his peers. The case study on Stéphane Hessel will demonstrate that he gained an international experience on the political stage before public opinion even read his books. Consequently, the notion of literary prestige defended by Sartre is not a *sine qua non* anymore for the new intellectual. There has been an evolution in the definition of intellectual “prestige” and it can be partly imputed to the rising importance of mass media. Therefore, Sartre's legacy for the next generation of intellectuals would not be so much his adaptability to mass media but the ability to alternate between periods of reflection and periods of collective projects for the good of society. The new intellectual should be committed

²⁵² Andrew Leak, *Jean-Paul Sartre*, (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2006), p.50.

²⁵³ Jean-Paul Sartre, in John Gerassi, *Talking with Sartre – Conversations and Debates*, interviewed by John Gerassi between 1970 and 1974, (Yale University Press, 2009), p.144.

to democratize his role and give society a sense of responsibility. As described by Edgar Morin, the intellectual should be '*présent dans son siècle*'.

Chapter 4 – Bernard-Henri Lévy, l'intellectuel contesté

In this three-part analysis of the contemporary French intellectual, Bernard-Henri Lévy holds a pivotal role between Jean-Paul Sartre, the initial model of the total intellectual, and Stéphane Hessel, the late bestselling diplomat. BHL – as he has been called since the early 1990s – is commonly, and often pejoratively, described as the “media intellectual”. However, one should acknowledge the simplification and redundancy of this designation. Indeed, public intellectuals have always relied on the media to convey their messages. Régis Debray, the philosopher who theorized mediology in 1979, defines the intellectual as follows:

A l’origine, l’intellectuel prend la relève du prêtre, du prédicateur et non pas du moine. Le prêtre est celui qui sermonne, qui exerce une action sur les laïcs, sur le peuple. D’où ma définition de l’intellectuel: quiconque a un projet d’influence. Mais l’influence a besoin de vecteurs, qui ont été tour à tour la parole dans le cas du prédicateur, l’imprimé à partir des XVIIIème et XIXème siècles, et c’est aujourd’hui l’audiovisuel. L’intellectuel est constitutivement *média dépendant* [...]²⁵⁴

Therefore, resorting to the demonization of the media in the study of the intellectual would cut off the subject from its context. If Lévy admits that he appeals to the media to get justice and draw the attention of public opinion to the causes he defends, he disagrees with Debray’s definition of the intellectual and also insists that he uses the media reluctantly:

Je crois qu’un intellectuel, c’est un écrivain, un philosophe, un artiste, un savant qui a un domaine de compétence ou d’excellence et qui en sort pour s’engager. C’est ça, un intellectuel. Donc, ce n’est pas “quiconque”. Deuxièmement, ce n’est pas “un projet d’influence”, en tout cas c’est un projet de justice, de défense. Et puis, “media dépendant”, oui, à son corps défendant. Moi, en ce qui me concerne, je n’ai pas un amour immodéré, contrairement à ce qu’on croit, pour les médias, loin s’en faut. J’y vais parce qu’il faut.²⁵⁵

Aside from being a media intellectual, who exactly is Lévy? This unusually multifaceted public figure is hard to categorize. Contrary to his predecessors, Lévy never really embraced the academic path. In fact, he entered Grasset’s publishing world at the age of 25. Lévy is originally a *philosopher* who brought *la Nouvelle Philosophie* into being in the late 1970s together with Andre Glucksmann, Pascal

²⁵⁴ Régis Debray, interviewed by Pascal Boniface, in *Les Intellectuels intègres*, (Paris: Jean-Claude Gawsewitch, 2013), p.138.

²⁵⁵ Bernard-Henri Lévy, interviewed by Marine Orain, 19 March 2014. See appendices.

Bruckner and others. He soon turned into an *historian* in 1981 with *L'Idéologie française* in which he traced back the roots of French fascism. Three years later, he became a *novelist* through *Le Diable en tête*, depicting the post-WWII generation in search of truth. He ventured into the role of *playwright* with *Le Jugement dernier* in 1992, before his disastrous start as a *filmmaker* in *Le Jour et La Nuit* in 1997. Finally, Lévy acted successively as a *war reporter* in Bosnia, Afghanistan, Darfur and Libya, advising French Presidents on the situation *on the front line*.

Lévy jumps from one role to another more or less with ease. He is nowhere and everywhere. No matter how many times he tries to embody *l'intellectuel engagé* on all fronts, “Le plus beau décolleté de Paris”, dixit the literary critic Angelo Rinaldi describing Lévy's open-necked white shirts, remains disregarded by most of his peers and public opinion.

Therefore, this chapter will look to establish what exactly undermines and discredits Lévy's status of public intellectual: his stance as a philosopher or his omnipresence in the media? The first part of the chapter will look to anchor Lévy to a context. We will seek to understand how political and historical backgrounds shaped his views, and who was his intellectual model. The second part will investigate his means of action from his relationship to books, to his more recent purposeful use of the Internet.

The rise and fall of *la Nouvelle Philosophie*

Lévy's bourgeois heritage and his non-participation in May 68 when he was 20 constitute his ball and chain. His inability to belong to the mass and his absence in the May events keep coming back in his interviews and books:

Le syndrome du scaphandrier. Le fameux thème sartrien des semelles de plomb qui vous font descendre de votre empyrée philosophique et vous ramènent dans le nu de la condition humaine et de la vie. J'ai assez pointé chez les autres cette attitude du plomb, c'est-à-dire de la mauvaise conscience, j'ai assez dit la dimension d'expiation et de pénitence qu'a presque toujours eu l'engagement des intellectuels, [...] j'ai trop dit cette nostalgie du concret chez les autres, dans les âges anciens, pour ne pas la soupçonner chez moi, aujourd'hui, à l'âge (Internet, clonage, virtualité déchaînée) où le réel, non content de se dérober, est en train d'exploser, de s'éclipser.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁶ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Réflexions sur la Guerre, le Mal et la fin de l'Histoire*, précédé de: *Les Damnés de la Guerre*, (Paris: Grasset, 2001), p.173.

Lévy has sufficiently acknowledged and denounced the guilty conscience of previous intellectuals, such as Sartre, to recognize the same guilty conscience that underpins his own intellectual interventions.

With hindsight, Lévy tries to make sense of his absence during the May events. His interpretation is ambivalent. Firstly, he regrets that he did not do enough and analyzes his departure for Bangladesh at the age of 25 as a possible act of redemption:

Suis-je parti pour le Bangladesh parce que je m'en voulais de n'en avoir pas assez fait en Mai? [...] Peut-être, oui. Peut-être toute cette aventure, le livre que j'en ai tiré, ainsi que, de proche en proche, tout ce qui, dans ma vie, jusqu'à ces *Damnés de la guerre* compris, est sorti de cette scène primitive, sont-ils en regard de ce rendez-vous à demi-manqué avec l'évènement-68 [...] ²⁵⁷

Yet he also criticizes some intellectuals' delirium during May, which he could not stand:

Et plus le temps passait, plus le délire s'accroissait – et plus j'avais le sentiment de vivre dans un monde étrange où, à force de tapisser le ciel de songes et de chimères, les meilleurs d'entre nous (les plus brillants, les plus savants mais aussi, il faut bien le dire, ceux qui poussaient le plus loin l'exigence morale) finissaient par s'inventer de fausses guerres menées avec de fausses armes contre des ennemis fantomatiques. ²⁵⁸

Even forty years later, Lévy refuses to pay any tribute to the "spirit of May":

Je ne suis pas, loin s'en faut, un ancien combattant de Mai 68. J'ai été de ceux qui, au lendemain de l'évènement, soulignèrent ce que la mystique du «sous les pavés la plage» pouvait avoir de naïvement naturaliste et utopique. Et loin de moi la tentation de verser, aujourd'hui, dans cette dévotion pontificante dont fait l'objet, 40 ans après, l'«esprit de mai». ²⁵⁹

Finally, as if no one could really question the relevance of May 68 without damaging their reputation, Lévy concedes that May constitutes a turning point in the fight against fascism and totalitarianism:

[...] ah comme elle est bête cette image d'un Mai 68 jouisseur, prédateur, inventeur de l'égoïsme consumériste, quand ce fut juste le contraire et un vrai moment, en fait, de don et de contre-don! Sans parler [...] de la lutte finale avec

²⁵⁷ Ibid, pp.224-225.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, p.230.

²⁵⁹ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Ce grand cadavre à la renverse*, (Paris: Grasset, 2007), p.52.

Moscou-la-Gâteuse, de la rupture avec tous les vieux Partis communistes jetés dans les poubelles de ce que nous commençons d'appeler le fascisme rouge – et sans parler de l'acte de naissance, là, de cet antitotalitarisme de gauche, et de masse, qui se cherchait depuis 50 ans et qui se trouve...²⁶⁰

Therefore, he admits several years later that he embraced this antitotalitarian spirit: 'Je suis tombé dans la pensée 68 comme Obélix.'²⁶¹ In fact, Lévy analyzed Sartre's late *engagements* with the Maoists as a regret at not having been more of a rebel when he was younger. This analysis could apply to Lévy too:

Je crois qu'il a vécu une sorte de crise d'adolescence à retardement. Les maos, c'était Nizan, Politzer, Le Breton qu'il n'avait pas compris, le Malraux qu'il avait raté, tous ces gens qui lui donnaient la jeunesse qu'il n'avait pas eue. C'est la malédiction des enfants trop choyés, qui vivent ensuite dans le sentiment qu'ils n'ont pas été assez rebelles, et qui se shootent à la jeunesse plus tard. Je crois que Sartre s'est octroyé une jeunesse tardive.²⁶²

From the year spent in Bangladesh in 1973 to his intervention in Libya in 2011, had Lévy experienced his own belated adolescent crisis ever since he missed May 68? At least, the missed opportunity that was May 68 for Lévy allowed him to stand on a pedestal when getting involved in *real wars* in his lifetime, like Bosnia and Libya, or talking about past wars in his books:

Mai 68, par ailleurs, par ma conception des choses, est un épiphénomène. Moi je crois plutôt à la Résistance, je crois plutôt à la Guerre d'Espagne, c'est plutôt dans cette mémoire-là que je m'inscris.²⁶³

His interventions abroad also internationalized his name, in the absence of an international academic career. Some of his predecessors did not witness May 68 either but exported themselves through academia, such as Michel Foucault at the University of Tunis between 1965 and 1968, and at Berkeley between 1975 and 1983. Aside from triggering a mere belated adolescent crisis, Lévy's non-participation in the May events gave a trajectory to his career. Another influence on Lévy's battles was the Dreyfus Affair:

²⁶⁰ Lévy, *Ce grand cadavre à la renverse*, p.53.

²⁶¹ Bernard-Henri Lévy, interviewed by Jean-Jacques Brochier, 'La sincérité de Bernard-Henri Lévy', *Magazine Littéraire*, Paris, 359, (1997), p.84.

²⁶² Bernard-Henri Lévy, interviewed by Jean-Jacques Brochier, 'Une philosophie par ruptures', *Magazine Littéraire*, Paris, 384, (2000), p.25.

²⁶³ Bernard-Henri Lévy, interviewed by Marine Orain, 19 March 2014. See appendices.

[...] “l’ Affaire”, la vraie, la seule, il n’y en a qu’une et ce fut, dira Mauriac, la scène inaugurale d’ “une guerre civile qui dure encore.” [...] A droite, alors, ceux qui plaçaient plus haut que tout la Tradition, l’Autorité, la Nation, le Corps Social rassemblé et, au passage, la haine des intellectuels, de la démocratie, du Parlement. A gauche, ceux qui, à ces antivaleurs, préfèrent la défense des droits d’un homme, donc des droits de l’homme, et de tout ce qui va avec: liberté; vérité; esprit critique; laïcité; quand la raison d’Etat délire, ramener l’Etat à la raison; quand l’individu sans importance collective menace d’être broyé par le collectif, prendre d’instinct, le parti de l’individu.²⁶⁴

Hence, Lévy’s determination to make Mitterrand and Sarkozy see sense during the Bosnian and Libyan wars. Looking back on his career, he seemed to justify his own view and choices through fundamental intellectual events such as the Dreyfus Affair and May 68, as if he was looking for the recognition – and forgiveness – of his peers and public opinion.

Further, when returning from Bangladesh in 1973, he soon realised that the academic world was not the most effective environment in which to convey his antitotalitarian message. Indeed, if his first book, *Bangla-Desh, Nationalisme dans la révolution*, published by Maspero, almost went unnoticed, he puts the blame on academia:

Quand je reviens, il y a trente ans, du Bangladesh, quand j’en rapporte ce paquet d’informations et d’impressions dont je brûle de témoigner et fais mon premier livre, je joue [...] le jeu de l’université et des revues, je respecte les règles du milieu, je montre patte blanche, je fais bien attention à ne pas me commettre à la télévision. Résultat: zéro. J’ai écrit ce livre pour rien. Je n’ai contribué en rien à briser le silence autour des ancêtres des victimes du tsunami. Eh bien, c’est ce jour-là que je comprends qu’il y a quelque chose de pourri au royaume des systèmes traditionnels de légitimation et de médiatisation. C’est ce jour-là, dans la tristesse et la rage, que je me jure que l’on ne m’y reprendra plus et que, si j’écris, un jour, d’autres livres, j’irai les défendre là où cela se passe, là où le message a une chance d’être entendu.²⁶⁵

From this perspective, who could blame him for being a media intellectual in order to promote his message? Probably his detractors, who see nothing more than self-promotion. Henceforth, he would *defend* each of his books through his publishing house, Grasset, and its long tradition of launching a book as an event. Grasset’s origins and characteristics will be analyzed in the second part of this chapter to

²⁶⁴ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Ce grand cadavre à la renverse*, p.54.

²⁶⁵ Bernard-Henri Lévy, Interviewed by Eric Conan, ‘J’ai une conception guerrière de la recherche de la vérité’, *L’Express*, 10 January 2005.

explain Lévy's conception of books. This was the end of Lévy's short academic career as a lecturer of epistemology at the university of Strasbourg. According to him, University was a barrier that stopped the academic from being in contact with the reality of the outside world, and consequently from philosophizing:

[...] l'Université n'est pas le bon lieu pour philosopher. Je crois que j'ai toujours cru, au plus profond de moi, que la philosophie se fait seul, à l'écart ou, sinon à l'écart, du moins dans un monde qui n'est pas celui de l'Académie, c'est-à-dire souvent l'académisme, pour éteindre le tumulte, assourdir le fracas du conflit et de la guerre – et nous rendre, nous, les philosophes, sourds à ce fracas qu'il serait si vital, pourtant, de savoir traiter, interpréter.²⁶⁶

To sum up, in the early 1970s, Lévy was already inhabited by the antitotalitarian spirit and the hands-on philosophy that would follow him throughout his career. Moreover, he already grasped the importance of working with a non-academic publishing house like Grasset.

In June 1976, he ushered *la Nouvelle Philosophie* in when he gathered in a special edition for *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* several intellectuals such as Roland Barthes and Claude Lévi-Strauss. Therefore, he was both the inventor of the term but also its publisher through the three collections that he ran at Grasset: "Figures", "Théoriciens" et "Enjeux". *La nouvelle philosophie* called for an antimarxism of the Left, disillusioned by the Revolution, pessimist by nature. Condemning violence as Camus had done previously, the likes of Lévy, Clavel, and Glucksmann wanted to confront public opinion with the successive atrocities of the century.

Reading *The Gulag Archipelago* by Solzhenitsyn triggered the new philosophers' parricide against Marx and Engels. Marxism was the dominant ideology, and consequently a conformist ideology. Lévy intended to break with the idols and reveal their responsibilities in the emergence of totalitarianisms. The new philosophers originally believed in the Revolution, but soon realized they were facing the new and more restricting mask of power. Lévy's generation also disregarded Jean-Paul Sartre who was already declining, losing his way in various petitions and supporting excessive modes of political action, like when justifying the Palestinian terrorist attack against Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympic games in Munich. Although Lévy's thoughts were more Althussero-Foucauldian than Sartrian at the

²⁶⁶ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *De la guerre en philosophie*, (Paris: Grasset, 2010), p.36.

time, Sartre was still a role model for Lévy, especially for his ability to come closer to the people, like in 1970 when he harangued Renault's workers in Boulogne-Billancourt while standing on a barrel. André Malraux also influenced Lévy, especially through the rhetoric of his speeches and his fight during the Spanish Civil War on the Republican side. Sartre and Malraux still embodied the *intellectuels engagés par excellence*, but now seemed outmoded by the new generation of philosophers.

The public would discover Lévy in 1977 through *Apostrophes*, the literary TV programme broadcast between January 1975 and June 1990 on Antenne 2. From this moment onwards, he would appear regularly on this programme and get media attention through his essays, reports, novels, plays, and art reviews.

In 1977, his book, *La Barbarie à visage humain*, captured the pessimism and disappointment of the new philosophers. The first few lines set the tone: the new philosopher has not turned thirty yet, but he does not believe in a better future and he is prepared to resort to as much drama as needed to make his point:

Je suis l'enfant naturel d'un couple diabolique, le fascisme et le stalinisme. [...] Je ne sais d'autre Révolution, dont le siècle puisse s'illustrer, que celle de la peste brune et du fascisme rouge. Hitler n'est pas mort à Berlin, il a gagné la guerre, vainqueur de ses vainqueurs, dans cette nuit de pierre où il précipita l'Europe. Staline n'est pas mort à Moscou ni au XXème Congrès, il est là, parmi nous, passager clandestin d'une histoire qu'il continue de hanter et de ployer à sa démente. Le monde va bien, dites-vous? ²⁶⁷

Bernard-Henri Lévy shows inconsistency from the very first pages. He takes on the role of the moralist²⁶⁸, while recognizing that he does not have the right to preach:

Absent de l'histoire qui se fait, confit dans la poignée d'homme que je suis, je n'ai aucun droit, je le sais, à prêcher et à vaticiner. Et pourtant je m'y décide, car j'ai la passion de convaincre... ²⁶⁹

After the step of self-justification, he continues to be ambivalent when he deals with the proletariat, and then with Marxism. Firstly, the philosopher declares that the proletariat does not exist:

²⁶⁷ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *La Barbarie à visage humain*, (Paris: Grasset, 1977), pp.9-10.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, p.11.

²⁶⁹ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *La Barbarie à visage humain*, (Paris: Grasset, 1977), p.12.

[...] Si on brandit le mot d'ordre de "l'organisation de la classe ouvrière en parti politique" c'est parce que, là encore, le pouvoir de la classe ouvrière est pensé dans le schéma de la prise du pouvoir bourgeois...Est-ce étonnant? Est-ce même scandaleux? C'est inévitable surtout, dès lors qu'on prétend donner un contenu à un concept qui n'en a point; dès lors qu'on veut identifier une classe dont on proclame dans le même temps qu'elle vise à l'universel.²⁷⁰

Lévy then claims that the proletariat is omnipresent as a dominated class:

Le prolétariat est la seule classe qu'on ne voit pas? Assurément, mais c'est la preuve moins de sa disparition que de son omniprésence. Sans culture, mais partout dans la culture. Sans représentation collective, mais partout dans les représentations collectives. L'idéologie dominante, pour parodier les marxistes, est peut-être en train de devenir l'idéologie des classes dominées.²⁷¹

He reiterates the same confusing process with Marxism by firstly describing May 68 as the end of Marxism in France:

Mai 68, ce n'est pas seulement l'explosion libertaire que décrivent avec émotion tant d'orphelins et de nostalgiques, ce n'est pas seulement non plus le début d'une lente dérive qui a progressivement mené tant de gauchistes stalinisants à la rupture avec le marxisme [...] Mai 68, c'est une des dates les plus noires du socialisme.²⁷²

Lévy then insists that Marxism cannot be forgotten and that adopting anti-Marxism is condemning politics:

Autant dire que l'idée d'une politique anti-marxiste est une idée absurde, intenable et contradictoire dans les termes: l'antimarxisme n'est rien d'autre, ne peut rien être d'autre que la forme contemporaine du combat contre la politique. Autant dire aussi que nous sommes, pour longtemps encore, voués à la langue du *Capital* pour autant que nous nous résignerons à jouer le jeu du politique. [...] Nous n'avons plus de politique, plus de langue, plus de recours. Il ne reste que l'éthique et le devoir moral. Il ne reste que le devoir de protester contre le marxisme, à défaut de l'oublier.²⁷³

As a consequence, his views on Marxism seem contradictory. He repeats Sartre's idea that Marxism is "incontournable" even if it tells the story of a political and theoretical failure. He advocates resolute pessimism: one should be anti-marxist, even if it is to no effect. In fact, he firmly believes that Marxism remains on the

²⁷⁰ Ibid, p.103.

²⁷¹ Ibid, p.191.

²⁷² Ibid, pp.211-212.

²⁷³ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *La Barbarie à visage humain*, (Paris: Grasset, 1977), pp.217-218.

agenda, even if it no longer makes the headlines: 'Il faut cesser, en fait, de mesurer l'importance d'une pensée au bruit que font ses hérauts et au travail de sa glose.'²⁷⁴ Coming from the most mediatised intellectual ever, the statement bears a certain nerve and irony.

The book faced many critics, among whom was Régis Debray who condemned the fusion of intellectual and communication powers under the term "*médiocratie*" in his book *Le Pouvoir Intellectuel en France* in 1979. Gilles Deleuze also blamed the new philosophers for creating nothing but philosophical marketing and condescending pessimism:

Ce qui me dégoûte est très simple: les nouveaux philosophes font une martyrologie, le Goulag et les victimes de l'histoire. Ils vivent de cadavres. Ils ont découvert la fonction-témoin, qui ne fait qu'un avec celle d'auteur ou de penseur [...]. Ceux qui risquent leur vie pensent généralement en termes de vie, et pas de mort, d'amertume et de vanité morbide. Les résistants sont plutôt de grands vivants. Jamais on n'a mis quelqu'un en prison pour son impuissance et son pessimisme, au contraire. Du point de vue des nouveaux philosophes, les victimes se sont fait avoir, parce qu'elles n'avaient pas encore compris ce que les nouveaux philosophes ont compris. Si je faisais partie d'une association, je porterais plainte contre les nouveaux philosophes, qui méprisent un peu trop les habitants du Goulag.²⁷⁵

Deleuze also disapproved of their thoughts that lasted for the time of an interview only. He deplored, in his own terms, the intellectuals' "*domestication*" and "*journalisation*". However, *Tel Quel's* Philippe Sollers, who saw in Lévy a potential ally against communism, acclaimed the book. Thanks to his laudatory article "La révolution impossible" in *Le Monde* on May 13th 1977, he became a *compagnon de route* for the new philosopher.

Nevertheless, in 1979, two years after *La Barbarie à visage humain*, Bernard-Henri Lévy seemed to have reached a deadlock with *La Nouvelle Philosophie*. With *Le Testament de Dieu*, it was time to draw some lessons from the crisis of the intellectuals and find a new crusade:

J'ai même écrit naguère une *Barbarie à visage humain* où voyant tant de fascismes solder leurs monstres souriants au grand marché d'Espérance, je concluais par un appel à la plus intransigeante, la plus "négative" peut-être, des lucidités critiques. Ce livre-ci, bien sûr, ne renie rien de cette exigence.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, pp.209.

²⁷⁵ Gilles Deleuze, 'Les Nouveaux Philosophes', interviewed in the review *Minuit*, 24, (1977).

Mais il commence, simplement, au point de doute et de suspens où elle butait encore. Il pose, il suppose, il parie que l'heure du désarroi est, d'une certaine manière, passée. D'un mot et sans détour, il se propose de filer cette unique, inlassable, intraitable question: l'horreur étant ce qu'elle est, au nom de quoi les hommes peuvent-ils, ici, maintenant, concrètement s'y opposer et la refuser?²⁷⁶

Bernard-Henri Lévy analyzed a posteriori the cause of the end of *La Nouvelle Philosophie* in his 1987 book, *Eloge des intellectuels*. He admitted that, like its predecessors, existentialism and structuralism, *La Nouvelle Philosophie* ended up paralysing intellectual debate. Indeed, the New Philosophers, especially Glucksmann who had initiated the reflexion on Marxism and totalitarianism in the group, all agreed with Hegel's conclusion that « *To think is to dominate* »: all political and intellectual thinking inherited from Hegel and Marx was contaminated with authoritarianism. Was this is a warning against the danger of thinking? It sounded like a late and superfluous statement.

To encapsulate the impasse reached by French intellectuals, Lévy drew the portrait of a new type of intellectual called *le Sartron*, who was a combination of the old enemies Sartre and Aron. Indeed, according to Lévy, the hand-shake exchange between Sartre and Aron, in June 1979, on the steps of the *Palais de L'Elysée*, at a press conference where they joined in calling on the French government to save Indochinese boat people, was the symbol of the self-condemnation of the intellectuals:

La date clé, à cet égard, aura été, j'en ai peur, la fameuse rencontre d'Aron et Sartre, sur les marches de l'Elysée, au moment de notre campagne en faveur des boat people. Belle rencontre, évidemment! Image inoubliable! Magnifique – et inattaquable – exemple de solidarité pratique face à des hommes qui se noyaient! Sauf qu'en passant de la pratique à la théorie, de l'image à la mythologie, en donnant à la poignée de main un sens qu'elle n'avait certainement pas dans l'esprit de ces acteurs, on entreprenait d'en faire l'indépassable modèle des rapports entre intellectuels. Il fut un temps, n'est-ce pas, où leur métier était de disputer, discuter, s'opposer fût-ce âprement. [...] Eh bien là, tout à coup, c'était fini. Que dis-je? c'était un crime. Car voici que surgissait, au firmament parisien, un drôle de personnage, un clone plutôt, mixte de Sartre et Aron, que l'on conviendra d'appeler le "Sartron" et dont le

²⁷⁶ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Le Testament de Dieu*, (Paris: Grasset, 1979), p.7.

rôle était de tirer un trait sur tout ça, de liquider toutes ces vieilles habitudes et de nous expliquer que, désormais, le rôle des clercs serait de s'entendre.²⁷⁷

Even before the “*Sartron*”’s arrival, Lévy reckoned that structuralism had undermined any constructive intellectual debate and had diluted culture, as it put all writers on an equal footing regardless of their historical backgrounds:

La méthode était féconde. Elle eut très vite des résultats. Mais le fait est que, en même temps, elle avait son effet pervers: en mettant ainsi à plat les événements discursifs contemporains, en traitant sur le même pied, sous le seul et nouveau prétexte qu'ils relevaient du même “socle épistémique”, une page de Buffon ou de Copernic et un auteur insignifiant, on faisait un premier pas sur la voie de la banalisation de la culture.²⁷⁸

It should be noted that nowadays “the absence of debate” or the “paralysis of debate” are accusations held against Lévy by his fellow intellectuals. Usually, three main reasons are given. Firstly, he is accused of censorship. According to his detractors, he uses his connections within the media and his public position to silence certain journalists and authors. Céline Buanic, a literary journalist for *Elle*, who once dared criticize Lévy’s book *Comédie*, was never able to write literary reviews again for the magazine. Moreover, Pascal Boniface, the author of *Les Intellectuels faussaires* in 2011, claims that his book on French intellectuals was rejected by 14 different publishing houses, although he is an established writer and political commentator. As a result, the cover of his book, now published by Gawsevitch, proudly bears the banner “Plus de 40 000 exemplaires vendus malgré l’omerta!” His aim was indeed to break the code of silence surrounding Lévy to stop censorship, and even self-censorship by journalists and publishers.

A second way of preventing the intellectual debate is ‘intellectual terrorism’, or when moralism turns into McCarthyism.²⁷⁹ To illustrate this accusation, his critics often provide the example of Lévy’s moral condemnation of Régis Debray, “Adieu Régis Debray”, published in *Le Monde* on 14th May 1999. Lévy was replying to Debray’s article published in the same newspaper the day before, «Lettre d’un voyageur au président de la République » in which he questioned NATO’s bombing of Serbia.

²⁷⁷ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Eloge des intellectuels*, (Paris: Grasset, 1987), pp. 31-32.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, pp.18-19.

²⁷⁹ Pascal Boniface, *Les Intellectuels faussaires, le triomphe médiatique des experts en mensonge*, (Paris: Gawsevitch, 2011), p.34.

Instead of engaging in a debate, Lévy resorted there to a strategy of exclusion, or excommunication.

Finally, his critics provide another reason for Lévy's absence in the intellectual debate: his lack of substance discourages his fellow intellectuals from engaging in a debate with him.

Si BHL échappe si régulièrement à la critique depuis plus de trois décennies, ce n'est pas seulement parce qu'il a le numéro de téléphone portable du Président de la République et qu'il dîne avec des capitaines d'industrie. C'est aussi parce qu'il est ridicule. Ses erreurs répétées, sa bourde Botul, ses énervements contre ses entarteurs, sa prétention, ses déclarations à l'emporte-pièce, cette façon de se prendre au sérieux alors que son œuvre est creuse comme un radis...tout cela est risible. Trop saugrenues, trop dérisoires pour justifier la critique publique de ceux qui pourraient le discuter.²⁸⁰

And yet, Lévy seems to benefit from this absence of adversity. His intellectual reputation might be overrated but it remains undisputed. In fact, since he cannot find any interlocutor among the French intelligentsia, he appears *forced* to play on other levels: politics and international interventions. Asked about the lack of theoretical debate in France nowadays, Lévy insists that many thorny international conflicts trigger debates but he remains vague on the names of his adversaries:

[le temps des débats intellectuels] revient. Il croise le politique. Il y a aujourd'hui un vrai débat sur la démocratie, il y a un vrai débat sur le devoir d'ingérence, un vrai débat sur la souveraineté des peuples, qui recoupent la question Poutine, qui recoupent les révolutions arabes, etc. Il y a de nouveau des affrontements d'une grande violence.²⁸¹

Lévy on the world stage from Bangladesh to Israel

International interventions, starting with the Bosnian War, would constitute a new form of *engagement* for Lévy. The Bosnian War represented, for him, the war against nationalism. Indeed, the war opposed ethnic Serbs, Croats and Bosnians and took place on the territory of Bosnia – Herzegovina between 6th April 1992 and 14th December 1995. The break up of Yugoslavia triggered the war. The Yugoslav People's army and the Bosnian Serbs supported by the Serbian government of

²⁸⁰ Jade Lindgaard and Xavier de La Porte, *Le Nouveau B.A. BA du BHL, Enquête sur le plus grand intellectuel français*, (Paris: La Découverte, 2011), p.244

²⁸¹ Bernard-Henri Lévy, interviewed by Marine Orain, 19 March 2014. See appendix.

Slobodan Milosevic intended to secure Serbian territory by attacking Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had just announced its independence on 1st March. It was principally a territorial conflict, accompanied by the ethnic cleansing of the Muslim Bosnian population. Lévy travelled to Bosnia and shot a documentary on the war, *Bosna!*, in September 1993, December 1993 and January 1994. The movie was completed in Paris in March 1994, before the end of the war. Lévy tackled the audience and more specifically François Mitterrand and all European political decision-makers about Bosnia with this question “L’Europe mourra-t-elle à Sarajevo ?”

Several reasons pushed him to intervene in Bosnia. Firstly, he saw in this intervention a way of defending human rights:

Il s’en est fallu de peu que je participe à cette équipée. Et cela parce que si le nationalisme croate m’est antipathique, j’ai autant que les autres le souci des hommes, et des pierres, dans Dubrovnik assaillie. Bien distinguer, dans cette affaire, le nationalisme (que j’exècre) des droits de l’homme (dont la défense demeure, évidemment, mon éthique minimale).²⁸²

He also aimed to draw attention to this “forgotten” war, as he had done in Bangladesh:

[...] cette pauvre guerre du Bangla-Desh, il y a maintenant plus de 20 ans, à laquelle j’allai me mêler par défi, presque par révolte – parce que c’était une guerre mineure justement, désertée par l’Histoire universelle, oubliée des chancelleries et à laquelle je voulais rendre une manière d’hommage...²⁸³

The questioning of the role of the intellectuals also made him feel cramped in his own country:

Le temps n’est plus aux débats théoriques. Il faudrait faire quelque chose. Mais quoi? De nouveau, l’idée d’y aller. [...] Ainsi va la vie intellectuelle dans cette province qu’est devenue la France...²⁸⁴

One can wonder why Lévy chose Bosnia in particular and why did he wait 20 years before getting involved in an international conflict. The answer came from Stanko Cerovic, a Montenegrin writer living in France:

²⁸² Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Le lys et la cendre*, (Paris: Grasset, 1996), p.16.

²⁸³ Ibid, p.28.

²⁸⁴ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Le lys et la cendre*, (Paris: Grasset, 1996), p.23.

Pourquoi je pars en Bosnie? Eh bien voilà. C'est lui qui l'aura le mieux formulé – ce grand Yougo au visage de voyou: “Vous y allez, me dit-il, parce que c'est là que se joue la première vraie bataille idéologique de l'après-communisme.” [...] Avant la souffrance de la Bosnie, le fait qu'elle soit une idée. Avant le sort des Bosniaques, le “concept” qui est en eux. Un intellectuel reste un intellectuel. Le concept d'eau n'est pas mouillé. L'idée bosniaque ne saigne pas. Mon incorrigible côté Benda (ou Althusser)...²⁸⁵

Indeed, Benda, the author of *La Trahison des Clercs* in 1927, did not just condemn the intellectuals' *engagement*, in fact he advocated *engagement* in the sole name of abstract and disinterested ideals of the clerk: truth, justice, reason and social and intellectual freedom. This is what he did precisely as a Dreyfusard.

Therefore, before the act of physically taking part in this war, Lévy claimed that he was firstly driven by the defence of a concept, defending human rights against nationalism. He denied that his intervention was a *Trahison des clercs*. Benda's Dreyfusard *engagement* was itself based on the fight for Truth and Justice, regardless of political or religious values.

However, the war reporters in Bosnia used to call him “QHS”, as in “Quatre Heures à Sarajevo”²⁸⁶ to mock the fact that Lévy's trips were rather brief. Still, he wished to *do* something for Bosnia, but he regretted that he did not have the skills or age to work in Sarajevo:

Moi, à Sarajevo, j'aurais voulu être médecin, ingénieur du génie civil, Casque Bleu. Et comme je n'avais ni la compréhension ni l'âge pour cela, j'ai finalement choisi de faire la seule chose qui fût à mi-chemin du geste et de la parole – et qui fût à ma portée: un film; puis un second, puis un troisième [...] ²⁸⁷

This self-justification could be compared to Sartre's words when he was 67 and explained that he could not go and work in a factory so he remained a classic intellectual and wrote on Flaubert.

Another form of his work in Bosnia would be his “war diary”, from which emerged his book, *Le lys et la cendre, Journal d'un écrivain au temps de la guerre de Bosnie* in 1996, which resembled a soldier's record of daily trials. Therefore, Lévy was detaching himself from the figure of the isolated intellectual, sitting in his room and pondering the atrocities of the 20th century. When he was not among the Bosnian

²⁸⁵ Ibid, p.29.

²⁸⁶ Nicolas Beau and Olivier Toscer, *Une imposture française*, (Paris: Les arènes, 2006), p.181.

²⁸⁷ Lévy, *Le lys et la cendre*, p.500.

population, he would be taking messages from Izetbegovic to Mitterrand. Obviously Lévy was not a soldier but he admitted that he had a certain fascination for war:

La guerre fait rage en Bosnie. Sentiment qu'il s'agit soudain de tout autre chose que de l'affaire croate. Et comme au temps du Bangla-Desh, irréprouvable envie d'y aller. Pourquoi? Je ne sais pas. [...] Motifs avouables de cet éventuel voyage: témoigner, s'engager, faire son métier d'intellectuel, etc. Raisons inavouables: elles sont sûrement nombreuses – à commencer, c'est vrai, par cette attirance sourde, assez ignoble, pour la guerre...²⁸⁸

Many could see in a bourgeois intellectual going to war a kind of farce, but Lévy insisted on detaching his background and lifestyle from his intellectual interventions. He was offended when people said he did not belong on the battlefield, but he also took responsibility for his life choices:

Un journaliste – à Sarajevo, mais correspondant d'un journal français – me demande, ce matin: "êtes-vous certain d'être le mieux placé pour défendre la cause bosniaque?" Puis, comme il me voit un peu surpris par la question: "votre style...votre mode de vie...les photos dans *Paris-Match*... votre mariage avec une actrice...toute cette médiatisation qui vous entoure et fait douter de la sincérité de votre engagement..." [...] Toujours la même histoire. Toujours ce piège du nom, ou du renom, où je me suis peut-être, au fond, fourré moi-même. Si je pouvais rejouer la partie autrement? Reprendre mes cartes, les abattre différemment? Je ne sais pas. Je ne suis pas sûr, honnêtement, que je ne rejouerais pas de la même façon.²⁸⁹

Lévy was aware of his privileged situation and knew he could not pretend to be someone else. Therefore he saw in these international interventions a way to give back to *les damnés de la guerre*. Taking risks gave him a peace of mind:

L'engagement des intellectuels, comme on dit, est en général une affaire sans péril. On combat la torture à coups de pétitions. On proteste contre le racisme en dînant à la table du Président de la République lors du Banquet annuel de SOS. On gronde à la télévision. On écrit de belles envolées contre Le Pen dans un agréable hôtel du Midi. Bref on milite. On s'agite. On triomphe parfois. Mais on empoche les dividendes de ce triomphe, et de la belle âme, et parfois du courage, sans avoir pris le moindre risque et sans avoir, le moins du monde, payé de sa personne. Alors, en général, on s'en accommode. On a mauvaise conscience, mais on passe outre. [...] Et on rêve d'un monde, ou d'une bataille, qui feraient soudain exception, qui permettraient d'apurer les comptes, de se mettre en règle avec soi-même – et, quand on la trouve, cette bataille, quand on la voit qui se profile, on saute évidemment dessus. Pour moi, ce fut, à 20 ans, le Bangla-Desh. Puis, dans une mesure bien moindre, l'Afghanistan. Et puis, maintenant, la Bosnie où je ne prétends pas que j'ai pris des risques

²⁸⁸ Lévy, *Le lys et la cendre*, pp.20-21.

²⁸⁹ Ibid, p.233.

inconsidérés, ni que j'aie trouvé l'occasion de solder les comptes...[...] Mais on a l'impression, en même temps, de commencer de payer physiquement ce qui ne se payait, jusque-là, que de mots.²⁹⁰

Lévy was aware that his intervention as an intellectual in a war constituted a new form of *engagement*. His predecessors would also intervene in the field, but few on a battlefield. Lévy's conception of the intellectual as a "risk taker" suggests that non-intervention is a form of cowardice. Aside from detaching himself from the traditional French intellectual, he also detached himself from any form of nationalism. Therefore, defending Bosnia was a way of defending the concept of Europe:

Je suis un cosmopolite résolu. J'aime le métissage et je déteste le nationalisme. Je ne vibre pas à *la Marseillaise*. J'espère que le cadre national sera un jour dépassé. Et l'un des principaux mérites de l'Europe, à mes yeux, est de fonctionner comme une machine à refroidir cette passion nationale.²⁹¹

In fact, anti-nationalism and "non-belongingness", in Lévy's own terms are recurrent themes in his work, which could explain his international interventions and his heavy presence on the Internet. To such an extent that once again Lévy appears to be a hybrid of a man of the left and a free-market liberal:

It is my character, my philosophy, which gave me this feeling of non-belonging. I am proud of my culture. I am proud of my language. I'm not proud of my passport. [...] When I was a student in May '67, '68, '69, there were students in the streets screaming, 'We are all German Jews.' There was a feeling of non-belongingness.²⁹²

Hence, Lévy claims that he is free to define his own agenda and that he chooses to stand up for a cause, without pressure from his country or anybody. And yet, this freedom of action turns against him, as his choices seem random to most of his critics. For example, Philippe Cohen, who wrote an unauthorized biography of Lévy, does not understand why he unconditionally supported Bosnia over Serbia and did not engage in a debate to find alternatives to the war. Here is Lévy's answer:

²⁹⁰ Lévy, *Le lys et la cendre*, pp.503-504.

²⁹¹ Bernard-Henri Lévy, debate with A. Finkelkraut, 'Les clivages ont encore un sens', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 4 October 2007.

²⁹² Bernard-Henri Lévy, Interviewed by John McDermott, 'I don't care much about my image', *Financial Times*, 14 June 2013.

Il y a des moments, dans l'Histoire, où le choix est clair et où il faut, en effet, résister ou se soumettre, refuser ou collaborer. Le moment bosniaque fut l'un de ces moments. Et c'est vrai que je n'avais ni le temps ni l'envie, à l'époque, de "débattre" avec les apôtres de la purification ethnique. De toute façon, c'est une question de principe. On ne débat pas avec certains adversaires. On ne discute pas avec les pervers.²⁹³

After all, the idea of non-belongingness that emerged from Lévy's Bosnian intervention would continue to grow through his visit of the USA in the footprints of Tocqueville, and through his investigation into the death of Daniel Pearl, an American journalist kidnapped by Pakistani militants and later murdered by Al-Qaeda in Pakistan. Lévy's next step was to be exposed as a global intellectual, and what better place to start than the USA?

Lévy's books, *Qui a tué Daniel Pearl?* and *American Vertigo*, have built his recognition in the United States. Daniel Pearl, the South Asia Bureau Chief of the *Wall Street Journal*, had gone to Pakistan as part of an investigation into the alleged links between Richard Reid (the "shoe bomber") and Al-Qaeda, when he was kidnapped on 23 January 2002 in Karachi by a militant group calling itself the National Movement for the Restoration of Pakistani Sovereignty. The group accused Pearl of being an American spy, therefore they sent the United States several demands, including the freeing of all Pakistani terror detainees. The message read: 'We give you one more day, if America will not meet our demands we will kill Daniel. Then this cycle will continue and no American journalist could enter Pakistan.' He was beheaded nine days later. The video of his decapitation was sent to editorial offices all around the world. Pearl's assassination prompted Lévy to investigate his death and the rise of fanatic Islamism in Pakistan. The fact that Pearl's other nationality was Israeli certainly weighed in Lévy's decision to investigate the murder of a Jewish journalist, since he is very attached to Israel, as we will see further in this chapter.

As a result, in May 2003, he came up with a new pseudo-genre, which he called "*le romanquête*". In doing so, he broke journalism's rules of objectivity and intellectual

²⁹³ Bernard-Henri Lévy, Interviewed by Eric Conan, 'J'ai une conception guerrière de la recherche de la vérité', *L'Express*, 10 January 2005.

rigour. Indeed, in his book, *Qui a tué Daniel Pearl?*, it was up to the reader to distinguish between the elements of reality and fiction. Lévy went so far as to imagine Pearl's very last thoughts in the hands of his executioner. Very understandably, Pearl's widow, Mariane, is critical of the French writer: 'How dare he steal my husband's last thoughts? How can you do that?' ²⁹⁴ Lévy also reached the conclusion that the reason why Daniel Pearl had been murdered was that he had probably found out that Pakistan's secret services had provided Al Qaeda with information on the atomic bomb. It is an irony of fate that the mastermind behind Pearl's kidnapping, Omar Sheikh, who was born and educated in England, turned to radical militancy when he travelled to Bosnia during the 1992-95 war. Lévy explains in his book that Sheikh fought on the same side as Bosnian belligerents and that he probably watched his film, *Bosna!* Still, at no time in this *romanquête* does Lévy look at his earlier unconditional support for Bosnian fighters in a new light.

Lévy's *romanquête* received a lukewarm welcome among American book critics, most of them acknowledge Lévy's many visits to Pakistan and investigation in Karachi retracing the reporter's footsteps, but they also condemn Lévy's approximations and hasty conclusions. William Dalrymple, the British historian, writer and critic who lives in India and specializes in the Middle East, India and Central Asia, wrote this criticism for *The New York Review of Books*:

[...]it is deeply flawed, riddled with major factual errors, and in every way a lesser book than Mariane Pearl's. Although attempting to create a new literary form—what Lévy calls a *romanquête*—mixing reportage with John Berendt— or Truman Capote—like novelization, it is apparent from its opening pages that with Pakistan, Lévy is way out of his depth. *Who Killed Daniel Pearl?* does, however, raise issues of great importance, for all that much of it is invented and its political analysis ill-informed and simplistic. The book's principal problem is the amateurish quality of much of Lévy's research. The section on the English childhood of Omar Sheikh begins raising one's doubts about the author's veracity: Omar Sheikh's family live, we are told, on Colvin Street, which does not exist in the London A–Z street atlas. Once we arrive in Pakistan the factual underpinnings of the book fall away. Lévy's grasp of South Asian geography is especially shaky: he thinks Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistani-held Kashmir (and the major jihadi center on Pakistani soil), is in India. The madrasa, or religious school, of Akora Khattack, not far from the Indus, he thinks is in Peshawar (it is more than eighty miles outside), while the town of Saharanpur,

²⁹⁴ Mariane Pearl, interviewed by Emma Brockes, 'Living bitter is living dead', *The Guardian*, 20 April 2004.

four hours' drive from the Indian capital, is said to be a remote part of Delhi.²⁹⁵ Lévy had not quite won America's recognition yet. Still, a year later, *The Atlantic Monthly* magazine commissioned Lévy to travel in the footsteps of Alexis de Tocqueville, the 19th-century thinker who spent nine months observing America before writing *Democracy in America* in 1835. His mission was to answer the question: What is left of Democracy in America at the dawn of the 21st century? The chief editor of the magazine, Cullen Murphy, chose Lévy to answer the question because of his anti-anti-Americanism, therefore Americans would be open to his analysis, despite the French-bashing following France's refusal to take part in the Iraq War:

Je connaissais depuis longtemps son travail, explique-t-il. Et c'était un Français qui n'avait jamais été viscéralement anti-américain. Il m'a semblé être celui qu'il nous fallait pour, dans le sillage du 11-Septembre, alors que les Américains se voyaient contraints de reconsidérer leur place dans le monde, nous tendre ce miroir d'un regard étranger.²⁹⁶

Will Murphy, the magazine's senior editor, also confirmed that Lévy was the right man for the job:

C'est le débat sur le sens de l'Amérique aujourd'hui qui interpelle les lecteurs. Je crois que toutes les raisons qui font que Bernard-Henri Lévy est détesté par certains dans son pays feront qu'il sera adulé ici, car il appartient à cette espèce curieuse et rare : l'intellectuel flamboyant.²⁹⁷

Therefore, the status of "media intellectual" that undermined Lévy so much in France was about to work in his favour in America. In the course of one year, Lévy visited all the American states, except Alaska and Hawaii. He wrote 70,000 words for the magazine as a series of seven articles, the first of which was published in the May 2005 issue. The Magazine's sales figures immediately went up by 20%. In parallel, Albert Sebag, journalist at *Le Point* where Lévy writes a weekly *bloc-notes* and member of the editorial board of Lévy's review *La Règle du Jeu*, advertised in France his American success:

²⁹⁵ William Dalrymple, 'Murder in Karachi', *New York Review of Books*, Thursday 4 December 2003.

²⁹⁶ Cullen Murphy, interviewed by Lila Azam Zanganeh, *Le Monde*, 'Bernard-Henri Lévy en Amérique', 20 May 2005.

²⁹⁷ Will Murphy, interviewed by Lila Azam Zanganeh, *Le Monde*, 'Bernard-Henri Lévy en Amérique', 20 May 2005.

Bernard-Henri Lévy est en passe de devenir l'auteur français vivant préféré des Américains. Son « Supplément au voyage de Tocqueville », publié en sept feuillets dans le prestigieux *Atlantic Monthly*, a un succès fou. L'écrivain a fait salle comble lors d'une conférence aux allures de concert rock à la New York Public Library. Le New York Times a récemment publié un long portrait de lui sous la plume d'Ed Rothstein. Quant aux networks, de ABC à CNN, du « Tina Brown Show » aux émissions de George Stephanopoulos et de Charlie Rose, toutes les grandes chaînes rivalisent pour faire venir BHL sur leur plateau. Autant dire qu'« American Vertigo » - son nouveau livre, rassemblant la totalité du feuilleton paru dans l'*Atlantic* augmenté de l'ensemble de son périple américain -, qui sera publié en janvier 2006 aux Etats-Unis, chez Random House, risque de dépasser les ventes du best-seller « Qui a tué Daniel Pearl ? »²⁹⁸

One cannot help but notice that this review advertised *American Vertigo* seven months before its release, giving it credit before it was actually published. Eventually, *American Vertigo* was published by the powerful publishing house Random House, which sent Lévy on a book tour. Besides, Lévy applied the same marketing strategy as for his previous books in France: he defended his book on TV too, in particular on Charlie Rose's talk show, in which the French intellectual appears regularly. Therefore, for once, Lévy's book was simultaneously published in English in America and in French in France. Lévy managed to give a global dimension to his work. Or did he? American critics lambasted his book for its superficiality:

Other than the fact that both De Tocqueville and Lévy are French, they have almost nothing in common. De Tocqueville was a magistrate, a jurist steeped in pragmatism and the moral causes of a just society. Lévy is a media savant, a lofty huckster in the modern world of sound bites. [...]

Lévy's temperament, his motivating interests and his focus are worlds away from De Tocqueville's. He admits, in his introduction, that only this commission made him read his predecessor (considered by the French to be a minor writer).

Whereas peppering a magazine article with famous names makes for a quick and jazzy read, "*American Vertigo*" begins to sound less like "*Democracy in America*" or "*On the Road*" and more like "*Celebrity in America*" or "*On the Make*."²⁹⁹

Although Lévy aroused the interest of American readers when he decided to follow Tocqueville's footsteps, he failed to convince his audience for the same usual

²⁹⁸ Albert Sebag, 'Périscopes', *Le Point*, 5 May 2005.

²⁹⁹ Marianne Wiggins, 'The accidental tourist', *Los Angeles Times*, 22 January 2006.

reasons: his lack of substance, his approximations and his attraction to prestige. However, he succeeded in globalizing his name and positioning himself as a man with influence, which reinforced his power. Indeed, in December 2011, in *Foreign Policy*, Lévy would rank 22nd in the American magazine's "top 100 global thinkers".

The war in Libya demonstrated Lévy's influence on politics & loyalty to the Left. When Lévy brought representatives of the National Transitional Council (NTC) of Libya to the Elysée Palace on 10th March 2011, he removed a thorn from Sarkozy's side. The President was struggling diplomatically. France was accused of lagging behind regarding the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions. Further, Sarkozy was embarrassed by the controversy on his welcoming ceremony of Kadhafi in Paris in 2008. When France became the first country to acknowledge the NTC – with the United Kingdom – Sarkozy got back in the game and Lévy gained in stature on the international political stage. Already in 2000, Lévy was well aware of the intellectual's power when the politician is in a shaky position:

[...] c'est quand l'Etat est le plus fort que la cléricature est la plus faible [...] et c'est, à l'inverse, quand le pouvoir politique s'étirole que les intellectuels relèvent la tête et prennent le relais – c'est dans les temps de basses pressions politiques, quand le sabre renonce et que le Prince baisse pavillon, que les "hommes de lettres" deviennent, comme disait Tocqueville, au chapitre premier du Livre III de *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, les "principaux hommes politiques du pays" et tiennent, "un moment", la "place" que "les chefs de parti occupent d'ordinaire dans les pays libres."³⁰⁰

Beyond playing the go-between for the French President and the NTC, Lévy operates parallel politics. Alain Juppé, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was not even informed of Lévy's visit to the Elysée Palace with NTC representatives. Therefore, not only is Lévy in *la mêlée*, he creates *la mêlée*, in the sense that he seems to mount the mobilization around the cause of his choice.

With Sarkozy's unashamed camaraderie in mind, Lévy felt the need to write a book, *Ce grand cadavre à la renverse*, in 2007, to reassure his political family of his faithfulness:

³⁰⁰ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Le Siècle de Sartre*, (Paris: Grasset, 2000), p.36.

Il faut que je précise que nous avons à ce moment-là, Nicolas Sarkozy et moi, des relations de camaraderie anciennes qui datent de sa première élection, en 1983, à Neuilly. Le hasard familial fait que je vote, à l'époque, dans sa ville.³⁰¹

The words are carefully chosen; Lévy knows that he is walking on thin ice. He needs Sarkozy's attention on Libya, and he needs to maintain a credible relationship with his political family of the Left if he intends to carry out his intellectual mission. He portrays the Left as both a very old body and a body bearing all the hopes for the future:

Si inimaginable que cela semble à qui considère "ce grand cadavre à la renverse où les vers se sont mis" (Sartre donc, 1960, préface à Aden Arabie) la gauche a toujours été et très vieille et très jeune. Et elle l'est aujourd'hui, et elle le demeure pour une part: vieille comme ces ruines qu'il faudrait, à la façon des restes des Cités maudites, oser recouvrir de sel; jeune comme l'espérance, quand elle est plus vaste que nos vies.³⁰²

Lévy justifies his allegiance to the Left through four crucial events – the Dreyfus Affair, Vichy, the Algerian War and May 68 – as these events created in him a determination – and an instinct – to fight fascism and totalitarianism. According to Lévy, the Left had been able to distance itself from its totalitarian past, contrary to the Right:

Il n'est pas vrai que, à une droite nostalgique de Vichy, de l'oeuvre civilisatrice de la France en Algérie, ou de l'ordre présixante-huitard, répondrait une gauche qui n'aurait rien appris, rien compris, rien oublié, du cauchemar communiste et totalitaire.

A la limite même, on pourrait presque soutenir que la gauche a fait, quoique, encore une fois, sans toujours le dire, un travail de mise à distance de son passé totalitaire que l'autre camp n'a pas fait sur le sien, ou qu'il n'a pas assez fait, ou qu'il a peut-être fait mais sur lequel il est en train de revenir au grand galop.³⁰³

Even in 2011, in his book *La guerre sans l'aimer – Journal d'un écrivain au coeur du printemps libyen*, Lévy felt the need to reaffirm that he would never subscribe to Sarkozy's political family, knowing very well that the doubt persisted in everybody's mind:

³⁰¹ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Ce grand cadavre à la renverse*, (Paris: Grasset, 2007), p.9.

³⁰² Ibid, p.38.

³⁰³ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Ce grand cadavre à la renverse*, (Paris: Grasset, 2007), p.112.

Est-il besoin de préciser combien la politique française, ses joutes, ses affaires, semblaient, vues de Benghazi et des rivières de sang que l'on y avait annoncées, lointaines et, parfois, dérisoires?

Et faut-il que je redise, ici, tout ce qui m'a séparé, me sépare et me séparera de ce Président qui n'est pas de ma famille et dont la politique, en France, n'a jamais eu mon adhésion?³⁰⁴

Finally, in November 2011, a couple of weeks after Colonel Kadhafi's death, Lévy justified his intervention in the Libyan War:

Ce que j'ai fait pendant ces quelques mois, je l'ai fait pour des raisons multiples. D'abord comme Français. J'étais fier de contribuer à ce que mon pays soit à la pointe du soutien à une insurrection populaire débarrassant le monde d'une de ses pires tyrannies. Il m'est arrivé parfois d'être fier d'être français. Je l'ai fait pour des raisons plus importantes encore: la croyance en l'universalité des droits de l'homme (...). Je suis de ceux qui ont toujours eu la tentation de se porter en soutien des victimes. Il y a une autre raison dont on a peu parlé, mais sur laquelle je me suis pourtant beaucoup étendu: cette raison impérieuse, qui ne m'a jamais lâché, c'est que j'étais juif. C'est en tant que juif que j'ai participé à cette aventure politique, que j'ai contribué à définir des fronts militants, que j'ai contribué à élaborer pour mon pays et pour un autre pays une stratégie et des tactiques. Je ne l'aurais pas fait si je n'avais pas été juif.³⁰⁵

Here Lévy seems more patriotic than in the early 1990s when he was driven by the idea of "non-belongingness". Today, he is proud of his country. He reasserts his faithfulness to universal values and human rights, like a traditional intellectual. He claims his intervention on the political stage is not self-interested, contrary to what his detractors say. Finally, he reasserts his attachment to Israel too and he harangues the crowd in Tripoli by saying that he is the representative of one of the oldest tribes in the world. Therefore, he claims he is the best interlocutor and he empathises with the Libyan tribes:

Je m'appelle Lévy, fils de Lévy, je suis le représentant d'une tribu, qui est l'une des plus anciennes et des plus nobles tribus du monde. J'ai porté en étendard ma fidélité à mon nom, ma volonté d'illustrer ce nom et ma fidélité au sionisme et à Israël.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *La guerre sans l'aimer – Journal d'un écrivain au coeur du printemps libyen*, (Paris: Grasset, 2011), p.12.

³⁰⁵ Bernard-Henri Lévy, 'BHL ne serait pas allé en Libye "s'il n'avait pas été juif"', *RTL* (2011) <<http://www.rtl.fr/actu/international/bhl-en-libye-je-ne-l-aurais-pas-fait-si-je-n-avais-pas-ete-juif-7737034667>> [accessed 1 October 2016]

³⁰⁶ Bernard-Henri Lévy, 'BHL ne serait pas allé en Libye "s'il n'avait pas été juif"', *RTL* (2011) <<http://www.rtl.fr/actu/international/bhl-en-libye-je-ne-l-aurais-pas-fait-si-je-n-avais-pas-ete-juif-7737034667>> [accessed 1 October 2016]

Lévy's attachment to Israel seems to be more and more visible, but declaring oneself as the representative of one tribe is going against the universal nature of intellectuals.

Lévy is accused of selectivity of *engagement* for defending Israel. When Lévy published *L'Idéologie française* in January 1981, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's presidential term was coming to an end, the PCF still attracted around 20% of voters and the Front National counted less than 300 members. Still, a bomb attack in October 1980 against a synagogue in Paris killed 4 people and injured 20. It was the most violent anti-Semitic act in France since the end of World War II. According to Raymond Aron, Lévy's essay on the philosophical roots of French fascism did nothing but stir up the fear of a return to anti-Semitism:

Nombre de Juifs, en France, se sentent à nouveau guettés par l'antisémitisme et, comme des êtres « choqués », ils amplifient par leurs réactions le danger plus ou moins illusoire qu'ils affrontent. Que leur dit ce livre, que le péril est partout, que l'idéologie française les condamne à un combat de chaque instant contre un ennemi installé dans l'inconscient de millions de leurs concitoyens. Des Français non juifs en concluront que les juifs sont encore plus différents des autres Français qu'ils ne l'imaginaient, puisqu'un auteur acclamé par les organisations juives se révèle incapable de comprendre tant d'expressions de la pensée française, au point de les mettre au ban de la France. Il nous annonce la vérité pour que la nation française connaisse et surmonte son passé, il jette du sel sur toutes les plaies mal cicatrisées. Par son hystérie, il va nourrir l'hystérie d'une fraction de la communauté juive, déjà portée aux actes du délire.³⁰⁷

Lévy's opponents on the Israeli-Palestinian question would criticize him for systematically accusing them of anti-Semitism. More recently, in 1996, after the Bosnian War, Pascal Boniface denounced Lévy's selectivity of *engagement* in his book *La Volonté d'impuissance*:

On peut cependant constater que la vive compassion éprouvée par nos flamboyants intellectuels à l'égard du peuple bosniaque, n'a d'égale que leur indifférence silencieuse, aussi ancienne que constante, vis-à-vis d'un autre peuple subissant lui aussi une injustice par la force, à savoir le peuple palestinien. La sensibilité au drame bosniaque, présentée comme la défense de principes universels, n'est souvent que le fruit d'un remords inavoué ou

³⁰⁷ Raymond Aron, 'Provocation', *L'Express*, 7 February 1981.

inavouable, d'un silence face à une répression musclée.³⁰⁸

Hence, in 1981, Pascal Boniface interpreted Lévy's public position on Bosnia as an implicit remorse for adopting an ostrich-like approach on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, since then, Lévy has not stopped reasserting his attachment to Israel. There is certainly no silence here; Lévy is quite vocal about his position. He has kept supporting successive Israeli governments in the name of the fight against terrorism and *fascislamisme*, a neologism he defines as follows:

[...] ce fascisme à visage islamiste, ce troisième fascisme, dont tout indique qu'il est à notre génération ce que furent l'autre fascisme, puis le totalitarisme communiste, à celle de nos aînés...³⁰⁹

It is not clear whether Lévy invented the term "islamofascism". Already in 1990, the Anglo-Irish writer Malise Ruthven wrote in *The Independent* that "authoritarian government, not to say Islamo-fascism, is the rule rather than the exception from Morocco to Pakistan."³¹⁰ Lévy positions himself as a defender of "Muslims' honor" to avoid any amalgam between "Massoud's heirs" and "Ben Laden's disciples":

Car qu'il y ait, aujourd'hui, au sein de l'islam, une bataille politique entre cet héritage de douceur et celui qui nourrit les prêcheurs de djihad, qu'il y ait une guerre sans merci entre, d'un côté, les partisans de l'aggiornamento d'une foi qui, comme les autres monothéismes avant elle, se déciderait à se mettre à l'heure du respect des droits du sujet et, de l'autre, les artisans de ce que je suis, sauf erreur, le premier à avoir appelé fascislamisme, que les premiers soient souvent trop timides ou, tout simplement, trop peu nombreux et que ce soient les seconds, je veux dire les fanatiques, qui tiennent, presque partout, le haut du pavé, c'est l'évidence.³¹¹

The problem is that Lévy tends to stigmatize anybody who does not share his views on Israel and Islamofascism. For example, he morally condemned Tariq Ramadan for denouncing communitarianism among Jewish intellectuals. Here is an extract from Tariq Ramadan's article, which was rejected by *Le Monde* and *Libération*:

Bernard-Henri Lévy, défenseur sélectif des grandes causes, critique très peu

³⁰⁸ Pascal Boniface, *La volonté d'impuissance*, (Paris: Seuil, 1996).

³⁰⁹ Bernard-Henri Lévy, 'La guerre vue d'Israël', *Le Monde*, 27 July 2006.

³¹⁰ Malise Ruthven, 'Construing Islam as a language', *The Independent*, 8 September 1990.

³¹¹ Bernard-Henri Lévy, 'L'honneur des musulmans', *Le Point*, 23 December 2010.

Israël à qui il ne cesse de témoigner sa « solidarité de juif et de Français ». Sa dernière campagne contre le Pakistan semblait comme sortie de nulle part, presque anachronique. En s'intéressant à l'abominable et inexcusable meurtre de Daniel Pearl, il en profite pour stigmatiser le Pakistan dont l'ennemi, l'Inde, devrait donc naturellement devenir notre ami... Lévy n'est bien sûr pas le maître à penser de Sharon mais son analyse révèle une curieuse similitude quant au moment de son énonciation et à ses visées stratégiques : Sharon vient d'effectuer une visite historique en Inde afin de renforcer la coopération économique et militaire entre les deux pays.³¹²

Lévy did not engage in a debate with Tariq Ramadan but morally condemned the writer and accused him of anti-Semitism. In fact, Lévy often seems to mistake anti-Zionism for anti-Semitism. For Lévy, a criticism of the Israeli government is an act of anti-Zionism, which he claims, is the contemporary mask for anti-Semitism. When Lévy conflates these two terms, he slides further away from the Intellectual figure. His reasoning here seems to be purely argumentative rather than analytical. Moreover, by granting his unconditional support to Israel, Lévy does not engage in any debate with his intellectual opponents, when he should be defending his views. Perhaps, his views on Israel would then contradict the importance he grants to antinationalism and non-belongingness. Is his support for the separation of Israel and Palestine based only on the idea of nation, and therefore frontiers? In this case, why defend the idea of a Europe without borders when he supported the Bosnian cause? At this precise moment, Lévy stops advocating the abstract universalism that can be found in his books. Can Lévy be a friend of Israel and remain an intellectual bearer of the universal values? It seems that when it comes to Israel, Lévy is very categorical: 'Je suis le représentant de la tribu d'Israël'³¹³; 'J'emmerde les boycottteurs (d'Israël)'.³¹⁴

Lévy presented an art exhibition in Saint-Paul de Vence from June to November 2013, "Adventures of truth - Painting and Philosophy", at the Maeght Foundation, in which he gathered more than 100 hundred ancient and contemporary works from around the world, from public and private collections. Israel's two main museums were the biggest lenders in this exhibition, which gives Lévy the opportunity to act

³¹² Tariq Ramadan, 'Critique des (nouveaux) intellectuels communautaires', Oumma.com, 3 October 2003, <<http://oumma.com/Critique-des-nouveaux>>, [accessed 1 October 2016]

³¹³ Bernard-Henri Lévy, interviewed by RCJ (Radio de la communauté juive), 17 November 2011.

³¹⁴ Bernard-Henri Lévy, interviewed for RCJ (Radio de la communauté juive), 11 June 2013.

as an ambassador for Israel in France.

Lévy refuses to engage in a reflection on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with other intellectuals. Consequently, one can imagine that this conflict is one of the reasons why Lévy and Stéphane Hessel, both intellectuals of the left and both concerned by contemporary international conflicts, never got to work together. Indeed, Stéphane Hessel regarded Israeli politics as *destructive* but seemed to be open to a dialogue on the conflict. Here is Stéphane Hessel's view on Israel:

[...] lorsqu'on me voit comme quelqu'un qui a un père juif, qui a participé à la création de l'Etat d'Israël – j'étais à New York au moment où cet Etat a reçu son acte de naissance – on se dit que je devrais avoir pour lui une telle affection que tout ce qui lui arrive devrait m'être cher et que je devrais reconnaître son droit à vouloir s'étendre. Non ce n'est pas le cas. Je considère qu'il se met dans une position inacceptable pour quelqu'un de juridiquement solide et je dis donc à ceux qui me critiquent "vous méconnaissent mon rôle ou mes intentions, je suis loin de vouloir la perte d'Israël, mais je considère que son avenir ne peut pas se confondre avec les politiques que ses dirigeants actuels pratiquent." Je pense donc être plutôt l'ami d'un Israël à construire qu'un défenseur de je ne sais quelle supériorité arabe.³¹⁵

Therefore, if Hessel was able to detach his historical background with Israel and the Jewish religion from his views on the conflict, why can't Lévy do the same? A more objective and analytical attitude on the topic would contribute to the intellectual debate and to his overall credibility.

From this first part emerged Lévy's principles and views on contemporary issues. He fought against totalitarianism and nationalism throughout his career. He advocated the ideas of non-belongingness and relative truth. He was mainly blamed for his lack of substance, his close relationship with politics and the incoherence in the choice of his interventions. Beyond understanding the political and historical context in which he evolved, one also needs to identify his intellectual models in order to have a comprehensive grasp of Lévy.

Lévy's modes of action

Lévy followed Sartre's footsteps in many different ways, both theoretically and practically, despite an age difference of 43 years. Sartre was 'incontournable' for late-twentieth-century intellectuals, who did not necessarily agree on all his positions

³¹⁵ Stéphane Hessel, interviewed by Pascal Boniface, in *Les Intellectuels intègres*, (Paris: Gawsevitich, 2013).

but acknowledged the impact of his active interventions into social causes. Lévy embraced Sartre's conception of the intellectual, *l'intellectuel engagé*, rejecting the academic path that was waiting for him when he left the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS). Indeed, in the first issue of *Les Temps Modernes* in 1945, Sartre's political, literary and philosophical review, Maurice Merleau-Ponty denounced the cloistered existence of the ENS and urged intellectuals to engage in real events:

Au-delà de ce jardin si calme où le jet d'eau bruissait depuis toujours et pour toujours, nous avons cet autre jardin qui nous attendait pour les vacances de 39, la France des voyages à pied et des auberges de la jeunesse, qui allait de soi, pensions-nous, comme la terre elle-même. Nous habitions un certain lieu de paix, d'expérience et de liberté, formé par une réunion de circonstances exceptionnelles, et nous ne savions pas que ce fût là un sol à défendre, nous pensions que c'était le lot naturel des hommes. [...] Habitues depuis notre enfance à manier la liberté et à vivre une vie personnelle, comment aurions-nous su que c'était-là des acquisitions difficiles, comment aurions-nous appris à engager notre liberté pour la conserver? Nous étions des consciences nues en face du monde. Comment aurions-nous su que cet individualisme et cet universalisme avaient leur place sur la carte?³¹⁶

One can deduce that the water and garden mentioned above refer to the inner courtyard of the ENS, a safe and quiet space where academic ideas could proliferate, as opposed to the brutal reality of the upcoming Second World War. Like Sartre, who turned to reviews, Lévy quickly left the academic world to intervene in contemporary conflicts and enter the publishing world. Before Sartre, no academics could get published in a non-academic publishing house.

Further, Lévy admired the traveler in Sartre and the way he was welcomed in each country he visited. He especially loved Sartre's independence and free will:

Car on a oublié, aussi, Sartre à travers le monde – New York, Cuba, bientôt Pékin, Moscou, le Proche-Orient, l'Amérique latine, l'Espagne, Cuba encore. Je l'aime, ce Sartre voyageur. [...]

Mais ce qui m'intéresse, ici, c'est autre chose. C'est le style même, non des récits, mais des voyages. C'est la façon dont il est vu, reçu, fêté, glorifié. C'est leur formidable écho, leur retentissement planétaire. C'est l'extraordinaire spectacle de ce Sartre en mouvement: une sorte de Parti à lui tout seul, un Etat, un chef d'Etat, un Etat-spectacle permanent dont il serait l'acteur, l'auteur, le metteur en scène, le régisseur et dont la planète entière va être le champs d'exercice, le théâtre – un Etat sans assise, un Vatican de l'Idée, Rome est où

³¹⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'La guerre a eu lieu', *Les Temps Modernes*, 1 (October 1945), p.48-66.

je suis, l'Eglise-Sartre n'a pas de territoire.³¹⁷

Lévy could well be writing about himself here, as he enjoys being everywhere and nowhere, making his own agenda and, as we can imagine, be welcomed as a hero. Lévy sees Sartre and himself as the providential intellectuals. He is convinced that Sartre could not escape a certain exposure since he was both a man of words and a man of action:

Jouant la partie aux deux tables du casino de la vie (la littérature et le monde, les livres et l'action, la logique du "régulier" et celle du "siècle") porte, par tempérament, sur les gestes autant que sur les textes (ce mixte que je connais, dans *Comédie*, le "gexte" et dont je prêtais le goût à tous les grands aventureux qui, comme Romain Gary, récusaient ce partage des deux vies et des deux moi), il ne peut, quelque tentation qu'il puisse en avoir, échapper à la lumière.³¹⁸

Once again, the reader cannot help but think that Lévy is actually trying to justify himself through the biography of his intellectual model. Lévy embodies the concept of "gexte" and positions himself in the category of "*les grands aventureux*". He exonerates himself from responsibility too when implying that fame, unfortunately, also comes with hatred:

[...] il y a, chez tout écrivain haï, ou réprouvé soit la conscience plus ou moins obscure qu'ascendant et haine vont de pair, qu'ils marchent ensemble, qu'on ne peut empocher l'un sans hériter de l'autre, ombre et lumière, avers et revers, la couronne et ses épines, oui, oui, c'est aussi bête que cela la couronne et les épines qui vont avec – soit même une jubilation secrète, Presque une forme de jouissance, la loi de la double couronne portée à son paroxysme: plaisir aristocratique de déplaire, comédien et martyr, leur fureur comme un témoignage, le fiel et le venin index de la vérité [...]

L'axe Spinoza – Voltaire – Sartre.

Le club, fermé, des grands exécrés.

Ces grands véridiques, ces haïsseurs de l'espèce, ces gens qui ne sont pas là pour nous dorer la pilule et qui le paient.

Redoutable honneur d'avoir suscité pareille haine.³¹⁹

³¹⁷ Lévy, *Le Siècle de Sartre*, pp.31-32.

³¹⁸ Ibid, p.44.

³¹⁹ Lévy, *Le Siècle de Sartre*, pp.53-54.

Again, Lévy would no doubt add his name to this prestigious list of hated writers, but he would see his partial unpopularity as a small sacrifice for the greater good. Lévy seems to be saying that there is nothing wrong with people's antipathy since Sartre went through it too and he remained a respected writer. For Lévy, the intellectual's role is to find and tell the truth. Since truth sometimes hurts, public opinion reacts fiercely to the intellectual's revelations. There seems to be no questioning from Lévy of the other possible reasons for people's hatred, as if he separated his personality from his role as an intellectual.

In fact, Lévy goes as far as to say that, conversely, fame can become a handicap for the writer, as it will end up conditioning the reception of any new work:

Le renom donc. Le renom. Le danger, pour une oeuvre, de se voir occultée par ce renom. Le risque pris par ces écrivains (Drieu, Malraux, Camus, tant d'autres – à commencer par lui, Sartre...) qui ont laissé grandir leur nom, et leur renom, au point de les voir faire concurrence à leurs romans.³²⁰

One could argue though that Lévy himself corroborates the opposite situation: his reputation as a questionable intellectual does not leave much chance to his work. Finally, Lévy seems to have learnt from Sartre how to make the most of mass media. As explained in chapter 4, Sartre had already engaged in the process of shifting from literature to audio-visual methods. Like Sartre, Lévy tries different media as if he hoped to fill the gap between his status as bourgeois intellectual and public opinion. Both Lévy and Sartre tried to get closer to the people by any means: literature, politics, theatre, conferences, radio programs, cinema etc. Lévy clearly admires the fact that Sartre's work was total; his influence extended into many genres and media:

Sartre est le seul qui, en une démarche dont je ne peux croire qu'elle ne soit, pour une part, consciente et calculée, a réussi à saturer l'espace littéraire et culturel de son temps. Sartre est le seul de tous les intellectuels de l'après-guerre à accomplir le tour de force de ne laisser aucun régime d'énonciation ou d'intervention échapper à son empire – metteur en toutes scènes; mon théâtre et mon royaume sont ce monde même, tout ce monde; rien de ce qui est ce monde ne m'est ni ne doit m'être étranger.³²¹

³²⁰ Ibid, p.43.

³²¹ Lévy, *Le Siècle de Sartre*, p.65.

Further, Sartre and Lévy both used journalism to reach the masses, Sartre through *Les Temps Modernes* and *Libération*, and Lévy through *La Règle du Jeu* and *Le Point*. In *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, Sartre admitted that the best way to make literature *engagée* was through journalism as it was immediately anchored in the present. Therefore, Lévy defines Sartre using the very adjective that is associated with his own name: *médiatique*.

A qui s'adresse-t-on quand on écrit? Réponse: au grand nombre; au très grand nombre; la philosophie et, à plus forte raison, la littérature ne vaudraient, de nouveau, rien si elles ne s'adressaient pas au très très grand public et, à la limite, à tous. C'est le Sartre médiatique. C'est le Sartre amateur de journaux. C'est le Sartre qui les lit, ces journaux, mais c'est aussi celui qui, comme Marx à la *Frankfurter*, ou Hegel rédigeant, presque seul, après son départ de l'éna, sa *Gazette de Bamberg*, aura des *Temps Modernes* à *Libération*, sans répit ni déception, la tentation de faire des journaux. [...]

Ecrire sur son époque...Pour son époque...Et dans cette époque, s'adresser au plus grand nombre...³²²

Finally, Lévy's definition of a great intellectual like Sartre seems to be addressed to himself: someone who can position himself and create his own platform. When writing Sartre's biography, Lévy has had the opportunity to reflect upon his own intellectual status:

"Grand Intellectuel", celui qui, soit instinct, soit calcul, sait se poster en ce point de l'esprit où convergent les forces les plus magnétiques du moment. [...]

Bête sans espèce, météore sans vrai présage, le grand intellectuel ne "succède" pas à un autre. Il ne vient pas occuper le siège qu'aurait occupé, avant lui, et avant de le laisser en déshérence, Gide, Malraux, Mauriac, pourquoi pas Barrès, tant que l'on y est? Il est cet arpenteur inspiré dont l'apparition a pour effet, non seulement de dessiner ce nouveau site et, dans le site, ce nouveau siège, mais de réorganiser, de proche en proche, l'ensemble de l'espace, et des sites, et sièges, autour de lui.³²³

This last line echoes Lévy's moulding of the Parisian publishing and journalistic world. Indeed, Lévy's sphere of influence – Khâgne, la rue d'Ulm, Grasset, *La Règle du Jeu*, Gallimard, Le Seuil, Flammarion, Hachette, La Sorbonne, Le Collège de France, L'Institut d'études politiques - concentrated in the 5th and 6th *arrondissements*. Hence, the concentration of places implies the concentration of

³²² Ibid, p.93-97.

³²³ Lévy, *Le Siècle de Sartre*, p.102.

men, which implies a concentration of powers. Lévy built his own empire out of Sartre's model of the *intellectuel engagé*. Lévy's late declaration of admiration for Sartre – and implicit modelling of himself on Sartre - can be regarded as his justification for his own status as a media intellectual and hands-on philosopher, countering the critics.

The act of writing remains Lévy's connection to the classic intellectual. After reading about Lévy's interventions in the field and hands-on philosophy, one can wonder why Lévy still writes books, symbols of the detached intellectual "au-dessus de la mêlée"? Books have always been the stepping-stones to intellectual consecration. They endure and open the path to peer recognition, as opposed to weekly articles and *bloc-notes*. Books are both the means of action and the goal of the intellectual. Books expose the intellectual as an individual and, if well received, constitute a springboard to success, whereas petitions do not allow the intellectual to stand out. Besides, since Lévy is being attacked on his media hype, he needs to protect his only remaining link with the classic intellectual: the writing of philosophical books.

Moreover, Lévy first entered the publishing house Grasset thanks to his very first book, *Bangla-Desh, Nationalisme dans la révolution*, in 1973. Françoise Verny was looking for young talents to open a non-fiction branch in this publishing house that had been made famous by its novels. Lévy was hired at the age of 25 and he immediately launched three collections. From now on, he could choose young authors and promise them glory. Lévy had not landed in just any publishing house. Grasset had revolutionized the launching of books in the sense that the publishing house created promotional events for each of its books. In 1912, its founder, Bernard Grasset, was the first publisher in France to buy advertising inserts in newspapers to sell his books. He demonstrated that a book could be sold too. Long before Lévy, Grasset was criticized for his media exposure:

Il provoquera autour du *Diable au Corps* de Radiguet un tintamarre qui dépassera tout ce qu'on avait imaginé jusqu'alors. Et il va devenir, brusquement, la cible privilégiée de tous ceux qui reprocheront aux éditeurs de

vendre des livres à grands coups de tam-tam, comme on lance une marque de chocolat ou de pâtes alimentaires.³²⁴

However, the publisher Bernard Grasset differs from the editor Lévy. Grasset was the publisher of Julien Benda's *Trahison des clercs*, which denounced the intellectuals driven by politics and their own interests:

[...] les hommes manifestent aujourd'hui, avec une science et une conscience inconnues jusqu'alors, la volonté de se poser dans le monde réel ou pratique de l'existence, par opposition au mode désintéressé ou métaphysique.³²⁵

Benda really influenced Grasset's conception of philosophy, to the point that Grasset started writing philosophical essays:

Le propos de Benda reflétait bien, en effet, son obsession du moment, laquelle n'allait plus le quitter. Il se découvrait une vocation de moraliste-philosophe, il voulait chercher en lui-même et au fond de sa propre expérience l'homme en général, par delà les gesticulations partisans et politiques de l'heure. Il voulait écrire sur les "choses essentielles" et ce besoin le démangeait de plus en plus. "C'est du même mal que nous souffrons en politique et en littérature: le verbalisme. Et c'est de cela même que la nouvelle génération ne veut plus... Elle a besoin de nourritures véritables."³²⁶

In fact, Lévy could be defined by all the characteristics that Benda deplored in these "corrupted" intellectuals. Benda noticed that for 200 years most literary men who became famous (Voltaire, Diderot, Chateaubriand etc.) got involved in politics. Similarly, one of the most recurrent pictures of Lévy in the media is the one where he appears in Libya with Nicolas Sarkozy and David Cameron. Politics put him on the international stage. Benda also disapproved of some intellectuals' tendency to court *la bourgeoisie*. Lévy's network includes businessmen, to such a point that he read the funeral oration of the businessman Jean-Luc Lagardère who owned Hachette, and therefore magazines like *Elle* and *Paris Match*. Benda also noticed that these intellectuals' lives were very different from Descartes's and Spinoza's in the sense that they were not reclusive: they were married, had children, and had a profession; they were "*dans la vie*". Again, the same applies today to Lévy the

³²⁴ Jean Bothorel, *Bernard Grasset, vie et passions d'un éditeur*, (Paris: Grasset, 1989), pp.157-158.

³²⁵ Julien Benda, *La Trahison des clercs*, (Paris: Grasset, 1975) (original edition in 1927), p.128.

³²⁶ Bothorel, *Bernard Grasset, vie et passions d'un éditeur*, p.196.

pragmatist. Finally, Benda condemned some intellectuals' artistic sensitivity: they exalted their feelings to the detriment of thought and reason. A comparison could be made here with Lévy's latest book and painting exhibition, "*Les Aventures de la Vérité*", although one could argue that Lévy "wrote" the exhibition before exhibiting it in Saint-Paul de Vence. Indeed, for him, painting and philosophy are not rivals: 'La question posée par l'art, c'est moins celle de la beauté que celle de la vérité'.³²⁷

Overall, Lévy's hands-on philosophy contrasts drastically with Benda's – and Bernard Grasset's - original detached view of philosophy. Lévy followed Grasset's footsteps on the path of book advertising, but he stuck to his own ideal of the intellectual, involved in politics and on the battlefield.

Lévy defines philosophy as war. During interviews, he is often asked whether he considers himself to be a philosopher. After so many field trips, movies and TV interventions, Lévy regularly needs to reposition himself as a philosopher, but a "hands-on" philosopher. First, he claims that the report is his favourite literary genre:

Il y a des écrivains qui se servent du roman pour explorer des possibilités inconnues de l'existence. Je fais, moi, des reportages. Peut-être parce que je tiens, comme Sartre encore, le reportage pour le genre littéraire par excellence. Peut-être parce que les romans d'aujourd'hui sont tous, de toute façon, en train de devenir des reportages. Le fait, quoi qu'il en soit, est là. C'est dans le réel, pas dans la fiction, que je vais, depuis longtemps, chercher mes perceptions inédites.³²⁸

He also published, under the title *De la guerre en philosophie*, a lecture he gave at the ENS on April 6th 2010, 'Comment je philosophe'. This place was highly symbolic for Lévy, since this is where he had attended courses by Althusser and Lacan. Once again, he insisted on the fact that philosophy was all about "doing": 'Dans "faire de la philosophie", disait Althusser, le mot important ce n'est pas "philosophie", mais "faire"'.³²⁹ In Lévy's mind, philosophy was a form of war. As proof, the title of chapter 4 in this same book: *Guerres de sang et de papier*. The lexicon of war can be found throughout his book; the philosopher replicated the strategies of a soldier:

³²⁷ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Les Aventures de la Vérité, Peinture et Philosophie: Un récit*, préambule, (Saint Paul de Vence/Paris: Fondation Maeght/Grasset, 2013)

³²⁸ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Réflexions sur la Guerre, le Mal et la fin de l'Histoire*, (Paris: Grasset, 2001), p.167.

³²⁹ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *De la guerre en philosophie*, (Paris: Grasset, 2010), p.16.

Chaque fois que j'ai, depuis 30 ans, fait un peu de philosophie c'est ainsi que j'ai opéré: dans une conjoncture donnée, compte tenu d'un problème ou d'une situation déterminés, identifier un ennemi et, l'ayant identifié, soit le tenir en respect, soit, parfois, le réduire ou le faire reculer. Guerre de guerrilla, encore. Harcèlement. Et à la guerre comme à la guerre.³³⁰

According to Lévy, a real philosopher has to witness and experience what was going on around him, in the street, at the doors of factories, and even better, on battlefields. Everything else, he thought, was only "opinion", not philosophy.

Further, he conceived of philosophy as on the offensive. The philosopher had to fight *against* something or someone, before advocating anything:

C'est Deleuze, je crois, qui disait qu'on ne fait de bonne philosophie que "pour" et jamais "contre"; eh bien je crois l'inverse; je crois, une fois n'est pas coutume, dans la vertu de la colère, et, même, de la passion négative; je crois que les grandes philosophies sont toujours des philosophies offensives; et je crois que la vraie question qu'une philosophie doit se poser c'est moins de savoir à quoi elle sert qu'à quoi, ou à qui, elle *nuit*.³³¹

This reasoning is somewhat reminiscent of Stéphane Hessel who used to harangue the crowd *against* the dictatorship of financial markets, *against* growing inequality between the rich and the poor, *against* overconsumption or *against* environmental deterioration in his pamphlet *Indignez-vous!*

In the absence of a real war in his country where he could have embodied the figure of the soldier, the saviour, the hero, was Lévy inventing his own war? Lévy thought globally; the world was at war and it was the very reason why he was a philosopher:

Je suis entré en philosophie parce que j'avais le sentiment, non seulement d'être né dans un monde qui avait, de justesse, échappé à l'anéantissement, mais d'entrer dans un autre monde qui était, lui aussi, au bord du gouffre. [...] si je fais de la philosophie, c'est parce que nous *sommes* en guerre, que nous *vivons* une guerre planétaire et que cette guerre est *cela même* qui est à penser.³³²

On top of the allegory of war, Lévy used the image of athletics to describe philosophy: the philosopher was an athlete, lifting the world on his shoulders:

[...] les philosophes sont des *athlètes*. S'il y a un fantasme philosophique – mais un fantasme qui, comme souvent, dit une part de vérité – c'est celui du

³³⁰ Ibid, p.56.

³³¹ Ibid, p.55.

³³² Bernard-Henri Lévy, *De la guerre en philosophie*, (Paris: Grasset, 2010), p.94.

philosophe portant sur ses épaules, tel Atlas, le poids d'un monde qui, sinon, retomberait.³³³

Hence, Lévy's definition of the philosopher, as a soldier or as an athlete, was very practical. He had certainly read Paul Nizan's *Les Chiens de garde*, originally published in 1932, in which the author urged the young generation of intellectuals to fight against the bourgeoisie and its "*chiens de garde*". The term referred to the philosophers of the time such as Bergson and Lalande whose philosophy, Nizan thought, was idealistic and did not take into account man's daily struggle: war, poverty, disease, unemployment etc. Therefore, Nizan demanded that intellectuals take a position:

Il est grand temps de les mettre au pied du mur. De leur demander leur pensée sur la guerre, sur le colonialisme, sur la rationalisation des usines, sur l'amour, sur les différentes sortes de mort, sur le chômage, sur la politique, sur le suicide, les polices, les avortements, sur tous les éléments qui occupent vraiment la terre. Il est grandement temps de leur demander leur parti. Il est grandement temps qu'ils ne trompent plus personne, qu'ils ne jouent plus de rôle.³³⁴

There is no doubt that Lévy preferred Nizan's line of conduct to Benda's austere detachment. Lévy was also following Michel Foucault's steps and the genre of the investigation, coming as close as possible to the event and placing himself on the side of the specific intellectual:

[...] Michel Foucault inventeur de ce nouveau genre philosophique qu'est l'enquête, oui, l'enquête, le souci de l'infime et du détail, le goût de l'Histoire devenue à l'en croire, "la vraie philosophie de notre temps", l'attention à "l'évènement" dans ce qu'il y a de plus empirique et de frêle.

C'est dans ce fil que je me situe.

C'est dans ces registres qu'il faut aller chercher, selon moi, matière à philosopher.³³⁵

Unfortunately, Lévy's "souci de l'infime et du détail" is not 100% viable: the release of his book *De la guerre en philosophie* was totally eclipsed by the fact that it contained a quote by the philosopher Jean-Baptiste Botul who, he thought, had

³³³ Ibid, p.30.

³³⁴ Paul Nizan, *Les Chiens de garde*, (Paris: Maspero, 1960) (originally published in 1932), pp.42-43.

³³⁵ Lévy, *De la guerre en philosophie*, p.86.

carried out research on Kant. In fact, Botul was a fictitious character invented by *Canard Enchaîné*'s Frédéric Pagès. Lévy's doubtful choice of sources undermined the success of his book and the foundations of his philosophy.

Lévy regards his websites as a *double machine de guerre*.

To conduct his philosophical war, Lévy armed himself with a “*double machine de guerre*”:

Et puis il y a surtout la machine de guerre, la DOUBLE machine de guerre, qu'a forgée à mon usage et à celui de mes compagnons de travail et de pensée, mon vieil ami Jean-Baptiste Descroix-Vernier, le roi français du web, l'un des hommes au monde qui connaît et aime le mieux l'univers de l'internet.

La première de ces machines: le site que Liliane Lazar, professeur à Hofstra University, Long Island, a créé il y a onze ans pour rendre justice à mon travail, pour tracer, retrouver, stocker et faire vivre les moindres textes ou images relatifs à mes engagements passés ou présents, mais que Descroix-Vernier a doté d'une ergonomie et d'une mémoire dignes des meilleures bibliothèques et centres d'archivage au monde – pour l'intellectuel engagé que je suis, c'est sans prix!

Et puis la seconde: *La Règle du Jeu*, ma revue littéraire et philosophique qui vient de fêter ses vingt ans mais qui est en passe, sur le Web, de devenir l'un des tout premiers magazines d'idées en ligne d'Europe, et en tout cas, de France.³³⁶

Lévy's interest in the Internet was triggered in 2008 when his book *Ennemis publics*, compiling 28 letters with Michel Houellebecq, was strongly criticized on the Internet:

Le livre a reçu un très bon accueil en presse, mais a été brisé en vingt-quatre heures par les blogs. Si on déclare la guerre à Internet, on est mort; il ne faut pas attaquer un tel système, mais le mettre dans son camp.³³⁷

Therefore, Lévy decided to equip Liliane Lazar's website, Bernard-henri-Lévy.com, with sharing features such as Twitter, Facebook and RSS feeds to use it as a marketing tool. Lévy is also present on Twitter with two active accounts (@bernardhl and @la regledujeuorg). He also has two profiles on Facebook, one in the name of his review, the other one in his name, (under the status “local business”) as well as

³³⁶ Bernard-Henri Lévy, 'Internet? Un allié!', Answers to the International Herald Tribune's questions on the importance of the Internet, 2 December 2010.

³³⁷ Bernard-Henri Lévy, interviewed by Christophe Barbier, 'L'e-BHL arrive', *L'Express*, 31 August 2009.

one “channel” on Dailymotion, the French video-sharing website. His official website, Bernard-henri-Lévy.com, and Laregledujeu.org often share the same content, with Lévy’s latest appearance in the media. Bernard-Henri-Lévy.com is resolutely turned towards his international followers: Lévy’s weekly bloc-notes in *Le Point* is translated into English and Spanish. Therefore, these translations are published in *El País*, *The Huffington Post*, or *The Wall Street Journal*, and they sometimes appear translated online before the French version is published in *Le Point*. It is striking that the bloc-notes format limits the intellectual to around 900 words. Therefore, how can Lévy rival his predecessors’ long opinion columns when addressing the masses? The message conveyed is automatically minimized in the eye of the reader. Nonetheless, Lévy defends this genre and its effectiveness:

Et la longueur du bloc-notes du *Point*, 1100 mots, j’ai le sentiment de pouvoir dire quelque chose en 1100 mots. Ça ne me gêne pas. La chronique est un vrai genre littéraire aussi, le bloc-notes est un genre, ô combien.³³⁸

Even though Lévy benefits from a weekly opportunity to express his ideas in this bloc-notes, Régis Debray believes that this is a very relative success:

C’est un succès chez les journalistes qui font caisse de résonance, pas chez ceux qui produisent du savoir ou le transmettent. Il y a la haute et la basse intelligentsia.³³⁹

Indeed, for Debray, in his book *Le Pouvoir intellectuel en France* in 1979, the intellectuals went through three phases, which gradually reduced them to the status of public entertainers: the professorial age, supplanted in the interwar period by the editorial age with the help of Gaston Gallimard and Bernard Grasset, and finally from 1968 the media age, with *Apostrophes*. Guy Debord would also support Debray’s theory of the intellectual as an entertainer, in 1987, describing *La Société du Spectacle*:

La société qui repose sur l’industrie moderne n’est pas fortuitement ou superficiellement spectaculaire, elle est fondamentalement *spectacliste*. Dans le spectacle, image de l’économie régnante, le but n’est rien, le développement est tout. Le spectacle ne veut en venir à rien d’autre qu’à lui-même.³⁴⁰

³³⁸ Bernard-Henri Lévy, interviewed by Marine Orain, 19 March 2014. See appendices.

³³⁹ Régis Debray, interviewed by Pascal Boniface in *Les Intellectuels intègres*, (Paris: Jean-Claude Gawsewitch, 2013), p.143.

³⁴⁰ Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle*, (Paris: Gérard Lebovici, 1987), p.14.

One could argue however that, aside from promoting his own image as a “*philosophe militant*” (in his own words), Lévy has an external motive when he shoots a movie during the Bosnian war, when he flies to Libya with Sarkozy, or when he condemns Israel’s boycott on the Internet. Mass media serves both his cause and his search for truth. Mass media also gives Lévy an additional opportunity to reinforce his status as intellectual. He failed to convince his peers, he can now try and conquer amateurs, and also perhaps, a wider audience.

Lévy is commonly demonized for his intensive use of the media and his field interventions. As described by Serge Halimi in *Les Nouveaux Chiens de garde* in 1997, this type of intellectual corrupted the classic intellectual:

Metteurs en scène de la réalité sociale et politique, intérieure et extérieure, ils les déforment l’une après l’autre. Ils servent les intérêts des maîtres du monde. Ils sont les nouveaux chiens de garde.³⁴¹

However, what makes Lévy outgrow the status of devoted servant of economic and political leaders is that he is able to work on an equal footing with businessmen and statesmen thanks to his wealth and connections. Halimi’s theory is already obsolete since Lévy is not serving the decision-makers, he is one of them.

As high-profile as Lévy may be, one cannot help notice a certain shame emanating from him when admitting that he needs the media to carry out his missions of justice and truth. To counter-attack his critics, he keeps belittling his use of new technologies such as the Internet, particularly social media:

Elles ne me font pas peur, mais je ne les trouve pas non plus enchantées.
Elles ne m’aident pas tant que ça, mais elles ne me font pas peur.³⁴²

He further categorically rejects the idea of a supposedly huge network surrounding him:

[...] il y a une connotation de cynisme dans le mot “réseau”. Une connotation idéologique dans l’histoire de l’idéologie française que je n’aime pas non plus. Quelque chose de complotiste, que j’aime encore moins, Et puis enfin, c’est pas vrai, et c’est peut-être le plus important: c’est-à-dire que, le problème c’est pas d’avoir un réseau, le problème c’est de tirer les bonnes sonnettes, de frapper aux bonnes portes, quand on a quelque chose à dire et qu’on veut que

³⁴¹ Serge Halimi, *Les Nouveaux chiens de garde*, (Paris: Liber/Raisons d’agir, 1997), p.9.

³⁴² Bernard-Henri Lévy, interviewed by Marine Orain, 19 March 2014. See appendices.

sa parole dépasse le cercle de cette pièce. Ce qu'ils appellent le réseau d'ailleurs change à chaque fois, c'est pas toujours le même. Pour moi, ça veut dire quoi? François Hollande est dans mon réseau? Nicolas Sarkozy était dans mon réseau? L'un pour l'Histoire de l'Ukraine, l'autre pour la guerre de Libye? Non, j'ai sonné à leur porte, point.³⁴³

His denial of the importance of a network of powerful contacts seems anachronistic at a time when every single person on the job market knows the stakes of social and professional networking. Would Lévy still be tagged as a “media intellectual” if he fully embraced this status instead of constantly playing it down?

What has become of the other intellectuals of his generation? Why are they not disparaged too? The main reason could be that they are invisible to the masses, most of them gathering in quaterly reviews such as *Vacarme*, *Tiqqun* and *Multitudes*. Unlike Lévy, they may avoid politics for fear of making *faux pas* and being publicly disowned, as Sartre did when supporting Ayatollah Khomeini for example. They may also fear mass media and the short intervention spans they provide. They may lack a philosophical position or a cultural movement to address the masses.

It remains the case that current intellectuals live in a world where states have globalized and interconnected interests, which sometimes paralyses international intervention, as the recent crisis in Syria has shown. This may be the ultimate chance for the intellectuals to stand as the guarantors of citizens' safety. From this perspective, is the intellectual more likely to defend justice, truth and reason by remaining out of the public sphere (elitist quaterly reviews, as public as they may be, do not constitute mass media) or by engaging with the field and using cinema, television and the Internet to address the masses?

Therefore, is this the end of the intellectual's textual intervention? Can the intellectual still have a large-scale impact through writing? Unlike Lévy, the intellectual Stéphane Hessel only resorted to writing towards the end of his career and still managed to play his part in the history of justice: he was one of the drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, he sold millions of copies of his pamphlet *Indignez-vous!* in 2010 although it was published through a small publishing house in Montpellier, etc. Lévy and Hessel are both media intellectuals in the sense that they are public, but Hessel's ideas first spread by themselves before

³⁴³ Bernard-Henri Lévy, interviewed by Marine Orain, 19 March 2014. See appendices.

their success was even noticed and mentioned on television and on the Internet. Perhaps the key dilemma for the intellectual is not so much whether to use the media, but rather exactly what type of media this should be?

Chapter 5 – Stéphane Hessel, l'intellectuel malgré lui

My research on contemporary French *intellectuels engagés* ends with the case study of a counter-model, Stéphane Hessel. Although he shared many characteristics with the pre-existing model of *intellectuel engagé* at the beginning and end of his life, his long diplomatic career constitutes an alternative form of *engagement*. He can also be seen to represent a particular type of European integration: the German-born philosopher who arrived in France in 1924 at the age of seven became an Ambassador of France at the age of sixty. Unlike most French intellectuals of Sartre's generation, not only did he never teach as an academic, he also wrote very few books in his career. Hessel was not a writer; he was a speaker who used his diplomatic skills to convince and his love of poetry to charm his audience. In fact, like most of his books, his best-selling pamphlet in 2010, *Indignez-vous!*, was more of an interview or a conversation with his publisher, Sylvie Crossman. The fact that he sold over four million copies of this little book worldwide despite not being a writer is incongruous – and certainly annoying for some intellectuals. This success was not entirely down to timing – the financial crisis and the high unemployment rate striking Europe at the time. Manfred Flügge, the German writer who studies German artists living in France, followed the last thirty years of Hessel's career and attributes his popularity to a combination of external factors as well as his experience and authenticity:

Hessel remplit un vide politique et social, et il est perçu par une partie de l'opinion, à l'instar de l'Abbé Pierre ou de Coluche, comme un homme de l'action et du parler vrai.³⁴⁴

Despite his belated fame and the respect he received from being a French Resistance member, a BCRA (Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action) agent and a concentration camp survivor, Hessel also had his detractors. His non-adherence to any ideology looked suspicious in the eyes of his contemporaries who could not categorise him. The lack of precision in his stands on politics, economics, social justice or environment contrasted with his clear position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, notably in *Indignez-vous!* He was accused of anti-Semitism for

³⁴⁴ Manfred Flügge, *Stéphane Hessel- Portrait d'un rebelle heureux*, (Paris: Editions Autrement, 2012), p.204.

criticising successive Israeli governments and describing Gaza as an open-air prison. BHL's view on Hessel encapsulates these various criticisms:

Je pense qu'un intellectuel engagé, ça suppose tout de même un socle théorique un peu solide que Stéphane Hessel n'avait pas, à mon avis. *Indignez-vous* était un petit livre à tous égards, sauf le succès qui a été immense, mais petit livre par la taille, petit livre aussi par l'argumentation. Et puis, pas d'oeuvres derrière. Je ne me sens pas proche de ça, vous voyez. Avec Bourdieu, j'avais des désaccords, par exemple, très violents, enfin là je sais ce qu'il dit parce que je sais dans quoi ça s'enracine. Stéphane Hessel, je ne savais pas d'où venait cet *Indignez-vous*, donc ça ne m'intéressait pas. Après, c'est un phénomène, ça a fait échos, évidemment à des tas de choses, ça je le sais bien, mais moi je n'ai rien à répondre à cela. [...] De surcroît, oui, sa participation aux campagnes BDS [Boycott, Désinvestissement et Sanctions contre Israël], l'interview qu'il a donnée pour le *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, sur Auschwitz et Israël. Il donne une interview terrible à la fin de sa vie. [...] ³⁴⁵

BHL was referring here to the article 'Wie ich Buchenwald und andere Lager überlebte' (How I survived Buchenwald and other camps) published in the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in January 2011, in which Hessel compared the German occupation of France during the Second World War with the occupation of Palestine by Israel. Hessel later apologized for this comparison and clarified his views by explaining that under the German occupation, French people had kept relative freedom of movement, compared to people currently living in the occupied Gaza Strip³⁴⁶. Some critics saw in Hessel's condemnation of Israel a strategy - « l'Holocauste Low Cost »³⁴⁷ - to sell his 3 euro book and make profit out of a genocide. Besides, he was also accused of using his almost irreproachable life to delude his readers into believing in a Manichean world :

Hessel, c'est l'axe du bien à lui tout seul : toute sa vie, il a eu tout juste, a toujours été du bon côté, ne s'est jamais compromis avec les salauds, s'est toujours arrangé pour que sa biographie ne puisse être autre chose qu'une hagiographie. L'achat de son livre par les gens ordinaires relève de la croyance

³⁴⁵ Bernard-Henri Lévy, interviewed by Marine Orain, 19 March 2014. See appendice.

³⁴⁶ Stéphane Hessel, 'Occupation nazie "inoffensive": critiquer Israël, est-ce de l'antisémitisme ?', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 11 July 2012.

³⁴⁷ Mourad Kiddo, 'Stéphane Hessel invente l'Holocauste low-cost', *Causeur*, 9 January 2011 <<http://www.causeur.fr/stephane-hessel-invente-holocauste-low-cost-8320.html#>> [accessed 1 October 2016].

magique que sa lecture pourrait faire de vous un homme ou une femme meilleur(e), réveiller le Hessel qui sommeille en chacun d'entre nous.³⁴⁸

Therefore, a certain mythologization surrounds Hessel, from radicalization and imposture to hero-worship. This chapter aims at cross-checking primary and secondary sources in order to draw as accurate a portrait of the intellectual as possible. For example, the philosopher and director of research at the CNRS, Pierre-André Taguieff, described Hessel as a « résistant de bureau »³⁴⁹ in order to put his status of Resistance hero into perspective :

Loin d'avoir été une grande figure de la Résistance – et personne, bien entendu, ne saurait lui en tenir rigueur -, Hessel a fait une modeste carrière de jeune résistant de bureau, qui a vécu à Londres de mai 1941 à la fin mars 1944.

Although Taguieff was right about Hessel's three years in London, he gives a rather brief and dismissive description of Hessel's role in the Resistance. He omitted to mention what Hessel exactly did in London and afterwards in France : according to his autobiography, he successively joined the Forces Aériennes Françaises Libres and the Royal Air Force to become an air observer, worked for the BCRA as the assistant head of the section R and met General de Gaulle once. He set up his own mission in France but on the 10th July 1944, in Paris, he was arrested by the Gestapo and was tortured in a building on the avenue Foch for 29 days. He would then spend 10 months in various concentration camps and escape from them.

The comparison of these two sources, Taguieff's article and Hessel's autobiography, highlights the fact that the intellectual's *engagement* is often met with scepticism. Taguieff seems to imply that a good resistant was an armed resistant, or someone who died because of their direct action in the Resistance, including intellectuals such as the philosophers Jean Cavallès, Jean Gosset and Georges Politzer. Hessel was aware that being a member of the Resistance in the offices of Saint James's Square was a totally different *engagement* than being in the field in France. Similarly, Sartre

³⁴⁸ Luc Rosenzweig, 'Stéphane Hessel, vieil homme indigne. Un CV glorieux n'excuse pas tout!', *Causeur*, 5 January 2011 <<http://www.causeur.fr/stephane-hessel-vieil-homme-indigne-8263.html>> [accessed 1 October 2016]

³⁴⁹ Pierre-André Taguieff, 'Stéphane Hessel, résistant ? Certes mais...', *Marianne*, 1 October 2011 <http://www.marianne.net/Stephane-Hessel-resistant-Certes-mais_a210915.html> [accessed 1 October 2016]

reflected on the degree of his *engagement* during the Second World War: 'Pendant l'occupation, j'étais un écrivain qui résistait et non pas un résistant qui écrivait.'³⁵⁰

The criticisms of Hessel and Sartre's *engagement*, or lack of *engagement*, show us that *not* all modes of intervention merit the same amount of respect in the eyes of their counterparts or audience. The majority of the French intellectual elite did not play a role in the Resistance, and yet those who did are judged on the *form* – and therefore the degree – of their *engagement*. This would imply that there is a hierarchy of *forms* in the intellectual's work. What's more, the clandestine nature of their actions had an impact on the *form* and recognition of their *engagement*: for Hessel, underground communication networks, for Sartre, the clandestine group "Socialisme et Liberté" of which there is no written trace.³⁵¹ Out of the public eye and the publishing system, does the intellectual remain *engagé*? Do the public value risk-taking and bravery in an intellectual? For example, would Hessel have sold as many books, had he 'only' been a diplomat?

Finally, one of the complexities when analysing Hessel's *engagement* – and the same applies to Sartre's and BHL's – is also the paradox between the universal values that he defends as an intellectual and the selectivity of his *engagement*. In 2011, when a fellow resistant, Sidney Chouraqui, addressed an open letter to Hessel in *Le Monde*, he reproached Hessel for taking a stand against Israel, downplaying Hamas's share of responsibilities in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and not denouncing other major conflicts in the world.³⁵²

All these criticisms against Hessel (no literary legacy other than pamphlets, conversations and interviews, no ideology, a lack of precision and a tendency to generalize when addressing global issues, the form, degree, mythification and selectivity of his *engagement*) challenge his status as *intellectuel engagé*. Being a counter-model with a long diplomatic career is one thing but being acknowledged as an intellectual is another. This chapter will highlight both his typical and distinctive characteristics. The first part of the chapter constitutes a short

³⁵⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Paris sous l'occupation', *Situation III: Littérature et engagement*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p.37.

³⁵¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is literature?*, (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1988), p.5.

³⁵² Sidney Chouraqui, 'M. Hessel, vous ne m'apparaissez pas fidèle à l'universalité de nos valeurs', *Le Monde*, 10 February 2011.

biography of Hessel. This step is necessary – and certainly not anecdotal – in order to get a good grasp of his extraordinary life, since the defining moments of his trajectory occurred during historical events. The second part focuses on his intellectual models. What is striking is that throughout his life he successively looked up to different intellectuals – including poets – because he could relate his personal experience to their work. He usually quoted their thoughts, but never claimed to be their heir. Finally, the third and biggest part of this chapter will be dedicated to his modes of intervention. The unusual forms of his *engagement* are what makes Hessel stand out from the other intellectuals. From diplomacy and clubs, to poetry, *livres de conversation*, speeches and philosophy, they have their advantages and limitations, but they gave Hessel a *capital sympathie* that would be the envy of today's intellectuals.

From immigrant to Ambassador of France

Growing up in avant-garde Paris in the 1920s provided Hessel with an internationalist outlook, polytheism and love for poetry. He was born during the First World War, on the 20th October 1917 in Berlin, but moved to Paris at the age of seven, with his Francophile parents and elder brother. His father, Franz, came from a Jewish family from Stettin, but never raised his sons in the Jewish religion. Franz's family had made a fortune in the grain trade. His interests in literature, languages and Ancient Greece materialized in the literary review that he founded in Berlin: *Vers und Prosa*. In 1906, he came to Paris and made friends with Henri-Pierre Roché, Guillaume Apollinaire and Marie Laurencin. Stéphane Hessel's mother, Helen, was born in Berlin into a Protestant family with a long tradition of architects and high-ranking civil servants. She wanted to become a painter and came to Paris to be trained by Maurice Denis. Franz and Helen met in Montparnasse in 1912. They would later form a love triangle with Henri-Pierre Roché who would then write in 1953 the semi-autobiographical novel *Jules et Jim*, inspired by this relationship.

Franz and Helen were both influential figures for their son in the sense that they inculcated Francophilia, polytheism and a certain creative freedom in Stéphane Hessel. He never had one religious faith, partly because of his parents' polytheism, but also because he was rather captivated by the Ancient Greek gods like Athena, Aphrodite, Apollo and Hermes. He preferred to admire mythological figures than

worship a single god; reducing religion to the Eternal Father was a harrowing experience.³⁵³ Both parents were poetry lovers and poets; therefore Stéphane Hessel learnt poems by heart from an early age. The third part of the chapter will explain how poetry would become a mode of intervention for Hessel as a public intellectual.

In addition, during his adolescence in the 1920s and 1930s, Stéphane Hessel was surrounded by Henri-Pierre Roché's friends, such as Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, Le Corbusier, André Breton and Pablo Picasso. At the time, Paris attracted the international avant-garde. The convergence of influential artists and intellectuals from so many different nationalities towards the same city is certainly remarkable for the time. What is even more striking for the interwar period is that, despite the rise of nationalism, these artists managed to create universal art out of networks of bohemian sociability and creative emulation. Hessel's early exposure to this "Ecole de Paris" certainly had an impact on his outlook on life:

Une certitude ne m'a jamais quitté: la vie n'a tout son sens que si elle ouvre les chemins qui mènent à ce surcroît de liberté créatrice, que si elle vise, par-delà le réel, l'accès à ce qui le surdétermine. Cette attitude, c'est dans mon enfance berlino-parisienne des années vingt que je l'ai puisée.³⁵⁴

Even if Hessel never made a living out of art, he was always inclined to poetry and enjoyed talking about paintings with others, especially to take his mind off difficult situations. Poetry would give him a spiritual strength in the concentration camps.³⁵⁵ Above all, what Hessel retained from the avant-garde family circle he grew up in is an internationalist outlook with which he embraced a diplomatic career.

An atypical education between Paris and London was waiting for Hessel. His choice of working in diplomacy rather than academia is understandable given that he was trilingual and traveled from a young age. German was his mother tongue. He became fluent in French when attending l'Ecole Alsacienne in the sixth arrondissement of Paris until the age of 15 when he passed the *baccalauréat de philosophie*. He then learnt English when staying in London, with Helen Hessel's

³⁵³ Stéphane Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, (Paris : Seuil, 1997), p.13.

³⁵⁴ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, p.18.

³⁵⁵ Manfred Flügge, *Stéphane Hessel- Portrait d'un rebelle heureux*, (Paris: Editions Autrement, 2012), p.171.

cousin, for one year between 1933 and 1934. Being trilingual helped Hessel throughout his life: in concentration camps, in the Résistance, at the United Nations in New York, in Africa and Asia when working in development aid. Until the end of his life, he would also recite poems in the three languages, experiencing different feelings according to the language of the poem:

C'est la sonorité même des vers qui inspire l'envie de les dire à haute voix et de les retenir. Chaque syllabe dégage un son propre qu'il faut ressentir au palais, un plaisir que Stéphane perçoit plus fortement dans les poèmes anglais ou allemands; la poésie française est un peu trop cérébrale à son goût.³⁵⁶

However, his favourite poet remained Guillaume Apollinaire because he could identify with him. The poet had a cosmopolitan background; he had also moved to France at the age of 7 and had to familiarize himself with Paris.

Hessel's mother had high expectations for his education, and so she enrolled him at the London School of Economics at the age of 16. This type of education is unusual because, as demonstrated by Jean-François Sirinelli in his *Thèse d'Etat* "Génération intellectuelle: Khâgneux et Normaliens dans l'entre-deux-guerres"³⁵⁷, most French intellectuals of that generation would have received a francophone education, attending a lycée, then the Khâgne to prepare for the Grandes Ecoles. Given that Helen Hessel was not French, she may not have been familiar with this well-known "royal road" in France. Helen Hessel's attempt to ensure a bright future for her son was more successful when she enrolled him at Hypokhâgne:

La seconde initiative de ma mère fut de suivre le conseil de ses amis français: flattant les ambitions qu'elle nourrissait pour son fils cadet, ils lui avaient fait valoir que, pour conquérir la France par le sommet, il fallait passer par l'Ecole Normale Supérieure. Elle m'inscrivit donc en hypokhâgne au Lycée Louis-le-Grand. Pour la première fois, j'eus l'impression d'apprendre à penser. [...] L'émulation intellectuelle que suscitent et encouragent ces lieux spécifiquement français, les classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles, convenait à ma forme d'esprit.³⁵⁸

Here he implied by omission that the LSE did not suit him, but he was also eager to move back to France to obtain French nationality when he turned twenty. Before being able to enrol at the ENS as a Frenchman, he went to La Sorbonne, where he

³⁵⁶ Flügge, *Stéphane Hessel- Portrait d'un rebelle heureux*, p.170.

³⁵⁷ Jean-François Sirinelli, *Génération intellectuelle. Khâgneux et normaliens dans l'entre-deux-guerres*, (Paris: Fayard, 1988).

³⁵⁸ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, p.37.

graduated in philosophy. Embracing his new nationality was highly symbolic for Hessel:

De cette France revendiquée, j'adopte les institutions et les multiples aspects de l'héritage culturel et historique: non seulement la Révolution de 1789 et la Déclaration des droits de l'homme, mais encore la valorisation sans cesse renouvelée de l'intelligence et de la tolérance, de la lucidité et du respect de l'autre: Montaigne, Pascal, Voltaire, George Sand; la conquête des libertés modernes: Hugo, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Apollinaire; la profonde clarté d'une langue analytique, articulée, précise.³⁵⁹

He claimed that his curiosity towards his “new” culture was so intense that he was not interested in foreign ideologies at the time. Consequently, Marxism and Communism never appealed to him, as opposed to his fellow Normaliens, or Sartre himself. Instead, Hessel was convinced that the search for a better social justice was the objective of a democracy and that it could only be achieved with the *engagement* of responsible citizens. This suggests that he believed in a more Republican model of social justice, as represented by Emile Zola. For example, in 1897, the latter had already exhorted young people to place the value of justice above any other interests in *Lettre à la jeunesse*³⁶⁰ – a message and a form very similar to Hessel's pamphlet *Indignez-vous!* in 2010. If Hessel did not adhere to any ideology, he was very much interested in philosophy. The second part of this chapter will look at his successive intellectual models, but if there is one philosopher to whom he constantly related ever since he was a Normalien, it is Sartre, especially for his idea of individual responsibility:

La foi idéologique qu'est le communisme et la foi théologique qu'est le christianisme me sont toujours restées extérieures. Entre les deux, je place Sartre, sans pour autant avoir été d'accord avec tout ce qu'il a dit et fait sur le plan politique. Mais cette façon de dire: “Tu es individuellement responsable, pas Dieu et pas le Parti; tu dois trouver ta voie et t'y tenir” m'amène à l'idée des relations entre les nations, c'est-à-dire à la diplomatie en général, et très vite aux Nations Unies.³⁶¹

³⁵⁹ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, p.39.

³⁶⁰ Emile Zola, *Lettre à la jeunesse*, (Paris: Editeur Eugène Fasquelle, 14 December 1897)

³⁶¹ Stéphane Hessel, *Citoyen sans frontières, Conversations avec Jean-Michel Helvig*, (Paris : Fayard, 2008), p.87.

Hessel would indeed enter the United Nations after the Second World War as an assistant to Henri Laugier, the vice-secretary general of the United Nations in charge of economic and social affairs.

The Resistance would become the trigger of his *engagement*. When the Second World War broke out in September 1939, Hessel was mobilized in the military school of Saint-Maixent, Deux-Sèvres, along with 3 other years of Normaliens, and he would soon be appointed as officer in the army. At first, like many Normaliens at the beginning of the war, Hessel maintained a critical distance from the military training. In March 1940, he led his section to the Saar. On the 22nd June 1940, Nazi Germany and the French Third Republic signed the armistice. His section laid down arms, but it was later captured by the Germans as prisoners of war and sent to a prison camp, where he heard about De Gaulle's appeal of 18th June. He managed to escape from the camp by crawling under the barbed wire. On the 10th July, Pétain was appointed "Head of State" and formally assumed near-absolute powers. Marechalism never tempted Hessel, and he claimed that he had rejected it as naturally as he had condemned Marxism in the 1930s. He regarded its followers as cowards who had not fought hard enough. In fact, Hessel's views on violence shifted in the sense that he now supported military acts that could protect France from the Nazis:

Et à ceux qui s'indignaient de la brutalité des Britanniques coulant, en juillet, les forces navales françaises à Mers-el-Kébir, je répondais que c'était leur droit d'empêcher qu'elles tombent aux mains des Allemands. Churchill et l'Angleterre étaient deux repères. Tous ceux qui voulaient qu'on se dissocie des Anglais et qu'on abandonne le combat alors que nos alliés continuaient étaient pour moi d'affreux défaitistes.³⁶²

He arrived in Bristol in March 1941 and joined an infantry regiment in Camberley, Surrey. Six weeks later, General de Gaulle invited Hessel and Louis Closon, also newly arrived, for lunch at the Connaught hotel on Berkeley Square, where the General was staying with his wife. De Gaulle would often invite new recruits for lunch. Hessel was apprehensive and had not entirely made up his own mind yet about the General:

On imagine qu'il va nous demander tout de suite: "Mais qu'est-ce qu'on pense de moi en France? Est-ce qu'on m'aime? Est-ce qu'on me respecte?" Non.

³⁶² Hessel, *Citoyen sans frontières*, p.53.

Son interrogation est beaucoup plus générale: “Quelle est l’évolution? Vous avez quitté la France à quel moment? Comment était le climat là-bas? Qu’est-ce qu’on pensait de la situation?” Et c’est nous qui disons, parce que naturellement nous avons aussi envie de lui faire plaisir, mais aussi parce que nous le pensons: “Eh bien, mon Général, votre appel a fait sensation chez beaucoup de gens de notre génération. Moi qui viens de l’Ecole Normale, par exemple, je peux vous dire que mes camarades normaliens sont dans l’ensemble très impressionnés par votre décision de poursuivre le combat.” Ce qui me frappe, chez lui, évidemment, c’est qu’il se comporte d’une façon qui n’a ni la grandiloquence, ni la condescendance ou le côté autoritaire qu’on pourrait craindre de quelqu’un qui se prend pour Napoléon. [...] Je m’interroge toujours. Comment va-t-il se comporter politiquement? Comment va-t-il opérer? Ce n’est que plus tard, lorsque je commence à connaître des Français de Londres, que, peu à peu, je me forme une opinion. Avec ces questions: “Est-ce un démocrate? Est-ce un républicain?” Parmi ses opposants, il y a des gens qui normalement me sont proches, comme Raymond Aron, que j’ai rencontré pendant ma formation à l’Ecole Normale. Il est pour moi une référence intellectuelle, et lorsqu’il essaie de m’expliquer que le Général de Gaulle est dangereux parce qu’il risque au retour en France de vouloir assumer une position autoritaire, voire dictatoriale, je ne suis pas du tout d’accord avec lui.³⁶³

This was to be the only time Hessel and de Gaulle met privately during the War. Hessel immediately noticed that De Gaulle was a gifted speaker and a good listener. He quickly saw in De Gaulle a legitimacy that the legal Vichy government did not have. After Camberley, Hessel joined the Forces Aériennes Françaises Libres (FAFL) and in June 1941, he enrolled with the Royal Air Force to become an air observer. In March 1942, his friend Tony Mella, who worked for the Free French military intelligence unit, the Bureau central de renseignement et d’action (BCRA), encouraged Hessel to join the organisation. Hessel accepted the offer to work as the assistant head of the section R. As an English-speaking and German-speaking Frenchman, Hessel had an interesting profile for the BCRA. His section worked in close collaboration with British secret intelligence service, MI6. In the offices of Saint James’s Square, Hessel longed for a more “noble” mission in France; therefore he set up his own:

Nous autres, les “planqués” du BCRA qui envoyions des gens au casse-pipe, nous étions très désireux de retourner à notre tour en France. Passy y est allé trois fois, Brossolette deux fois, Manuel une fois. Mella disait: “Moi je n’y crois pas, il faut des types sérieux dans les bureaux, et tant pis s’ils n’ont

³⁶³ Stéphane Hessel, *Vivre avec De Gaulle: Les derniers témoins racontent l’homme*, ed. by Michel Tauriac, (Paris: Plon, 2008).

pas la gloriole d'avoir affronté le danger." Je ne partageais bien sûr pas ce point de vue et j'ai annoncé dès le début ma résolution. J'ai donc monté une mission pour moi-même. [...] J'ai ainsi été envoyé en France en mars 1944 pour une mission dont le nom de code était "Greco" et qui consistait à reconstituer les communications entre nos réseaux de renseignement en France et l'état-major de Londres.³⁶⁴

On the 10th July 1944, in Paris, He was arrested by the Gestapo and taken to a building on the avenue Foch. One of his connections had informed the Gestapo of his activities. He was tortured for 29 days: handcuffed, beaten, water boarded, and electrocuted. In the end, he admitted that he was "Greco" because too many witnesses had identified him. In a fourteen-page article for *Les Temps Modernes* in March 1946, "Entre leurs mains", Hessel wrote about his experience as a prisoner. However, in his autobiography, Hessel seemed to admit a moral weakness when conceding that the account he gave in *Les Temps Modernes* embellished his real experience and behaviour as a prisoner. This confession strikes a contrast with Sartre's uncompromising view on free will and individual responsibility. It also goes against the status of the classic intellectual as guardian of universal values such as truth and morality.

On the 8th August 1944, he was sent to the Weimar-Buchenwald concentration camp where he stayed until the 2nd November 1944. With the help of a German doctor, he managed to steal the identity of a French prisoner who died of typhus, Michel Boitel, and was transferred to Rottleberode camp where he worked as an accountant. The fact that Hessel spoke German and told stories and poems certainly helped him to get some "privileges". In February 1945: He escaped during the morning walk between the camp and the factory, but he was arrested in the next village and sent to Dora extermination camp. Finally, on the 4th April 1945, Dora was evacuated towards the north. He escaped from the train of prisoners, reached Hanover on the 12th and joined an American commando unit. On the 8th May 1945, he was back in Paris, at the Gare du Nord, where his wife, Vivia, was waiting for him.

Hessel's four escapes from the camps show how determined and lucky he was to survive. In fact, it seems that, at the end of his life, Hessel was assailed by guilt, not because of his German background since he had spent most of his life in

³⁶⁴ Stéphane Hessel, *Citoyen sans frontières*, Conversations avec Jean-Michel Helvig, (Paris : Fayard, 2008), p.69.

France, had Francophile parents and had embraced his French nationality at the age of 20, but rather for being a survivor and for allowing atrocities to happen in the post-Second World War era:

Alors quand nous [the survivors] nous rencontrons – et cela m’est arrivé bien souvent et inopinément – il y a comme un signal qui s’allume: non pas tant la fierté d’avoir survécu que la honte d’avoir permis que l’horreur recommence, ici et là, dans ce monde dont nous pensions qu’il ne verrait plus jamais ça. Et le même signal nous fait éprouver en commun, de manière très vite perceptible, un sentiment de responsabilité pour le monde de demain.

Je ne suis plus sûr de comprendre ce jeune homme des années 40-45, français par choix, patriote par le contexte, imprudent par jeunesse, particulièrement chanceux, pluri-survivant, polyglotte, narcissique, égoïste.³⁶⁵

Nevertheless, he managed to draw something positive from this guilt: his future *engagement* and vocation for diplomacy. He passed a post-graduate degree in philosophy in five months, for which he wrote an essay on “solitary and shared suffering”, based on his experience in the camps and the work of Kierkegaard. Therefore, he was able to relate his intellectual work to his own lived experience. On a theoretical level, it makes sense that Hessel chose to work on the early 19th century Danish existentialist philosopher. Kierkegaard valued individual trajectories over collective destiny, which inspired Sartre to conceptualize a more radical individual responsibility: towards oneself and towards the world we live in.³⁶⁶ Besides, Kierkegaard rejected abstraction in philosophy and was more interested in real life emotions that were not analyzed by traditional philosophy, such as inner turmoil, guilt, or fear of death.³⁶⁷ For Hessel, Kierkegaard showed intellectual courage. Hessel’s experience and theoretical framework paved his way for a concrete *engagement*.

Hessel was about to become “Entrepreneur de coopération”, in his own words, in Europe and beyond. After the Second World War, Hessel and his wife travelled to New York in February 1946 to visit Vítia’s parents. Vítia’s well-connected father played a decisive role in the launching of Hessel’s diplomatic career. Boris Mirkine-

³⁶⁵ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, p.98.

³⁶⁶ Georges Perilleux, *Stig Dagerman et l’existentialisme*, (Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1982), p.88.

³⁶⁷ Hélène Soumet, *Le Petit Larousse des Grands Philosophes*, (Paris: Larousse, 2013), p.227.

Guetzevitch, famous professor of constitutional law in France, was the vice-president of the Free School for Advanced Studies, a university-in-exile for French intellectuals in New York, created in 1942. Within this school, he had also created “La Société d’Histoire de la Révolution française”, which became a network of sociability for intellectuals. He quickly introduced Hessel to Henri Laugier, the UN assistant general secretary, who was gathering a team for the secretariat. Hessel embraced a five-year post in the UN as an executive officer in the social affairs department. He would defend the United Nations until his death, despite its slowness and paralysis at time:

Sans doute correspondait-elle [the Organisation] exactement à l’image que je me faisais, au sortir de la guerre, de l’engagement qui devait être le mien: participer à la construction d’un monde dont seraient exclus les bombes atomiques et les camps de concentration, l’impérialisme et la violation des droits de l’homme, dans le lieu le plus stratégique et le plus central.³⁶⁸

The highlight of his first five years at the United Nations would be observing the editing of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, adopted on 10th December 1948, at the Palais de Chaillot, in Paris. Hessel would then often refer to the articles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* to exhort young people to act against the violation of human rights. At the end of his life, he made it clear that he had had a modest role, as Henri Laugier’s principal private secretary, in the elaboration of the Declaration:

Je n’étais qu’un jeune petit diplomate, frais émoulu du concours du Quai d’Orsay, recruté par les Nations unies pour s’asseoir à côté de gens très sérieux comme René Cassin, Eleanor Roosevelt, Charles Malik, qui, eux, travaillaient à la rédaction d’un texte. Mais j’étais là, et je vivais la mise en forme de valeurs universelles. J’en ai retiré un formidable bénéfice moral et intellectuel. Participer à cette réflexion sur les libertés formelles, fondamentales, sur les droits civils, économiques, sociaux, dont nous avons tous besoin, vous donne quelques bases!³⁶⁹

This clarification was needed because, in a way, Hessel had taken part in his own mythologisation in his autobiography by remaining vague about his degree of involvement in the writing of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*:

J’eus pour privilège de participer à la rédaction du premier volet de cette chartre des droits de l’homme [...]

³⁶⁸ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, p.112.

³⁶⁹ Stéphane Hessel, *Tous comptes faits...ou Presque*, (Paris : Libella, 2011), p.119.

Nous, les membres du secrétariat, occupions les sièges du fond.³⁷⁰

Therefore, his ambiguous wording at first led journalists to credit him with more than what his role actually encompassed. It remains a fact, however, that his first experience at the UN developed his interest in conveying universal values and preserving relations across the international community. After 5 years working for the UN, Hessel worked at the Ministère des affaires étrangères between 1951 and 1954. He represented France in front of different international institutions, mainly the UN, to defend human rights and social questions. Therefore he travelled constantly between Paris, New York and Geneva. This time, his view on the UN became more critical as the UN Security Council was often blocked by the unanimity rule of the 5 permanent members. When Pierre Mendès France (PMF) became Prime minister in June 1954, Hessel was appointed to work in his cabinet to help prepare PMF's weekly radio interventions, *Les Causeries du samedi soir*, which were a novelty borrowed from Roosevelt's strategies of political communication³⁷¹. When PMF's cabinet fell in February 1955 over the rejection of the European Defence Community Treaty by the National Assembly and the issue of Algeria³⁷², Hessel left France for Saigon. He was supposed to help prepare the reunification of Vietnam after the Geneva Conference, but in the end the failure of reunification led to the Vietnam War.

The return to power of General De Gaulle in May 1958, pushed Hessel to resort to a second mode of intervention in parallel with diplomacy: clubs and associations. He created the Club Jean Moulin with Daniel Cordier after De Gaulle's return that they regarded as illegitimate:

Nous qui avons dénoncé l'aveuglement des antigaullistes de Londres, nous avons été choqués par les prises de position nationalistes et réactionnaires du RPF. L'âge et la rancune n'auront-ils pas fait de ce personnage ambigu qu'est le Général un ennemi des libertés publiques? Ce sont les plus "gaullistes" du temps de la guerre, ceux qui avaient retenu de l'appel du 18 juin la leçon de

³⁷⁰ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, p.116-117.

³⁷¹ Marie-Françoise Lévy, *La Télévision dans la République: les années 50*, (Paris: Editions Complexe, 1999), pp.28-30.

³⁷² Michel Winock, *Pierre Mendès France: les paradoxes d'un itinéraire politique*, <http://chroniques.bnf.fr/archives/avril2004/numero_courant/conferences/mendes.htm> [accessed 1 October 2016]

désobéissance civile, qui ont réagi les premiers. Ainsi est né le Club Jean Moulin.³⁷³

Until 1970, the Club gathered ex-*maquisards* who wrote collectively in favour of the independence of Algeria, decolonization, the renewal of democratic institutions and the construction of an economic and political Europe. *Le Monde* and *Le Bulletin du Club Jean Moulin* would publish their work.

Hessel valued the civic *engagement* and the absence of an ideological agenda that the Club represented, as opposed to political power. Its texts were anonymous, signed collectively. The Club refused to accept politicians among its members. They feared the politicization of the Club and were, in a way, a throwback to Julien Benda's thought on the depoliticization of the intellectuals in *La Trahison des clercs*, in 1927. The Club never had any President. However, Hessel seemed to wonder if the Club, and therefore he himself, should become engaged in the political realm:

Quant à la question de fond – un club doit-il s'engager, peser dans la balance des décideurs, prendre position sur les événements du jour? – elle n'est pas facile à trancher. Perd-on son autorité morale en entrant dans l'arène des rivalités partisans? Mais à quoi sert cette autorité si elle se confine dans une tour d'ivoire?³⁷⁴

These questions would undermine the cohesion of the club that ceased to exist in 1970. It seems that Hessel reflected during his entire career on the eternal dilemma of the intellectual, which is whether to intervene in public affairs and politics or to remain out of them, in the "Ivory Tower". Political resistance to Sarkozy's presidency pushed Hessel to run for the 2010 regional elections as a symbolic candidate for the green party Europe-Écologie-Les Verts:

Pourquoi cet engagement? Je me considère depuis toujours comme socialiste – c'est-à-dire, selon le sens que je donne à ce terme, conscient de l'injustice sociale. Mais les socialistes doivent être stimulés. J'ai l'espoir de voir émerger une gauche courageuse, impertinente s'il le faut, qui puisse peser et défendre une vision et une conception des libertés des citoyens. De plus, il me semble important qu'il y ait des verts dans les institutions, pour que la notion de préservation de la planète progresse.³⁷⁵

³⁷³ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, p.151.

³⁷⁴ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, p.155.

³⁷⁵ Stéphane Hessel, *Engagez-vous! Entretiens avec Gilles Vanderpooten*, (Paris: Editions de l'aube, 2011), pp.43-44.

Hessel championed both Europe and ecology and was close to José Bové. He then offered his public support to the Socialist candidate, Hollande. Hessel believed in an alliance between the Green Party and the Socialist Party.

Compared to other intellectuals, what is particularly distinctive with Hessel is that he operated a triple shift from philosophy to diplomacy, and then from a traditional diplomatic career at the Quai d'Orsay to multilateral diplomacy, and finally civic *engagement*. Had he stayed at the Quai d'Orsay, he could have developed his own political career, but he never harboured any individual political ambitions. Instead, during the 40 years he dedicated to development assistance in Algeria and Sub-Saharan countries, Hessel faced many failures:

Le résultat a été l'appauvrissement des populations africaines, au moins aussi gravement exploitées par les dirigeants africains qu'elles l'avaient été par les administrateurs coloniaux. Elles ont été maintenues en servitude grâce à l'appui que l'ancienne puissance tutélaire apportait à leurs nouveaux maîtres.³⁷⁶

Hessel's denunciation of French neo-colonialism in 1997 goes against Mitterrand's call for democratisation in his La Baule speech in June 1990. The Hessel report titled « Les Relations de la France avec les pays en développement » was ordered in 1990 by the Prime Minister, Michel Rocard. It already criticized the clientelism of the assistance programmes, the limitation of these programmes to French-speaking countries only and the persistence of a one-way Jacobin relationship between the North and the South, instead of establishing partnerships. The Elysée decided not to publish the Hessel report, although a few NGOs managed to get a copy. This episode sums up the frustration of the intellectual trying to intervene concretely in the public field but silenced by the political and economic interests of powerful individuals.

International law and the return to philosophy would become Hessel's tools to help solve the global crisis. When he retired from diplomacy, Hessel remained a whistleblower in the sense that he still denounced economic inequalities, violations of human rights and damage to the environment until the end of his life. However,

³⁷⁶ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, p.197.

he was now spending more time in France – acting as a spokesman for the “sans-papiers” in Paris for example – and worked most of the time within clubs and associations, such as the International Ethical, Political and Scientific Collegium. There were no more politicians exerting their authority over his actions. He called himself a “médiateur civil”, working with the people and for the people. In fact, he was now mostly addressing the young generation to encourage them to get involved in society as he did. Despite his long career, the public only knew him at the age of 93 with his 30-page pamphlet *Indignez-vous!* in which he exhorted young people to protect the social benefits once obtained by the Conseil National de la Résistance. His book had a particular resonance in the context of the global crisis that started in 2008. His publishers explain how *Los Indignados*, the Spanish anti-austerity movement, appropriated the text:

L'Espagne l'a un petit peu débordé, comme si le mouvement se développait au-delà de lui. Les Indignés espagnol ont eu des contacts avec lui. Au moment où les Indignés avaient envahi le Parlement espagnol, il était un peu embêté. C'était un personnage profondément engagé, mais ce n'était pas non plus un révolutionnaire. [...] Mais, à cause de son passé, son histoire dans la résistance, il craignait toujours des débordements. ³⁷⁷

Hessel was a social democrat who had kept in mind the terrible outcomes of the 20th century revolutions. He believed that the global crisis would not be solved by demonstrations. Instead, he called for fairer national legislations, a stricter enforcement of international law to solve conflicts and a return to the ancient philosophy that had brought core universal values. Hessel would then become the author or co-author of eight other books and many prefaces, before his death on 26th February 2013.

Hessel's intellectual models

Hessel was often criticized for allowing emotions to show through his speeches or pieces of writing, to such an extent that his detractors doubted his theoretical knowledge. For others, his passion was the very reason why Hessel

³⁷⁷ Sylvie Crossman, Hessel's publisher at Indigène Éditions, interviewed by Marine Orain, 18 September 2014.

appealed to the public.³⁷⁸ In January 2011, in a Q&A session, the Prime Minister François Fillon referred indirectly to Hessel's *Indignez-vous!* which had already sold 800.000 copies:

L'indignation pour l'indignation n'est pas un mode de pensée. [...] La complexité du monde actuel réclame d'abord de la lucidité, de l'exigence intellectuelle, parce que tout ne s'écrit pas en noir et blanc, mais elle réclame aussi et surtout des actes.³⁷⁹

Perhaps for fear of upheaval in France, Fillon was implying that Hessel lacked intellectual depth and was misleading people with Manichean views. That same year, Hessel published another book, *Tous comptes faits... ou presque*, in which he justified his exhortation to indignation and reasserted his attachment to philosophy. He based his argument on Spinoza's definition of indignation. In *Ethics*, Spinoza describes indignation as a sad passion that poisons life. According to Spinoza, feelings enslave us if we don't know their causes, whereas understanding them can set us free.³⁸⁰ Following the same logic, Hessel clarified that indignation should come after the full comprehension of a situation and should always be paired with rationality. He also reiterated that indignation was the first step towards social change.³⁸¹ With *Indignez-vous!*, Hessel found an international success, but the other side of the coin was the criticisms of its lack of theoretical references. To these accusations, one could reply that Hessel did in fact refer to Sartre in this pamphlet. However, Hessel only made a reference to Sartre because his publishers encouraged him to talk about the intellectual who was at the source of his *engagement*. Sylvie Crossman explained how she and Jean-Pierre Barou helped Hessel in the writing process:

Le passage sur Sartre, c'est nous qui l'avons suggéré, comme il nous parlait beaucoup de Sartre qui avait été un personnage important de sa génération. Il l'avait aidé à prendre conscience de cette notion d'engagement et à le précipiter lui-même dans l'engagement. On a fouillé un peu autour du texte, comme toute conversation. Comme ce livre est une conversation, forcément

³⁷⁸ Flügge, *Stéphane Hessel- Portrait d'un rebelle heureux*, p.211.

³⁷⁹ François Fillon, Hôtel de Matignon, 10 January 2011, <http://archives.gouvernement.fr/fillon_version2/premier-ministre/discours-du-premier-ministre-lors-de-la-presentations-des-voeux-de-la-presse.html> [accessed 1 October 2016]

³⁸⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, (San Francisco: City Lights books, 1988), p.26.

³⁸¹ Stéphane Hessel, *Tous comptes faits...ou Presque*, (Paris, Libella, 2011), p.38.

les interlocuteurs s'émulent l'un et l'autre, ils rajoutent des choses. Donc quand on a transcrit le texte, on a développé le passage sur Sartre.³⁸²

This example indicates that Hessel did not feel the need to quote Sartre, as opposed to Lévy who wrote a biography of Sartre. This perhaps suggests that Lévy felt a greater need than Hessel to place himself within an intellectual and ideological context. This also reminds us of the vulnerability of intellectuals when opting for a short medium to expose their ideas, whether it is a 30-page pamphlet, a 10-minute interview on television or a 140-letter character tweet. Hessel's longer books allow a better understanding of his intellectual influences:

[...] Il faut dire qu'à entretenir une relation intellectuelle étroite avec des penseurs comme autrefois Benjamin, Adorno, Sartre ou Merleau-Ponty, comme aujourd'hui Sloterdijk, Carrière, Debray, Morin – et encore, je ne les cite pas tous –, je suis frappé de voir combien de cheminements scientifiques, politiques et poétiques si différents peuvent à ce point converger vers un appel à une prise de conscience des problèmes et un rappel de l'essentiel.³⁸³

This may seem like Hessel was resorting to mere name-dropping here, but he used these intellectual references to help him shape his *engagement* at different times in his life: Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological philosophy of experience reinforced his desire to pursue a diplomatic career, instead of an academic career; the sociologist Edgar Morin formulated with him a concrete proposal to reform society after the 2008 financial crisis, and so on. Hessel was constantly "in dialogue" with these references. As for his *engagement* with political and spiritual questions, he also published dialogues with Aung San Suu Kyi and the Dalai Lama. In this second part of the chapter, we will divide Hessel's intellectual models into 4 groups according to the moments when Hessel endorsed them.

Ancient Greek philosophers were a particular interest of Hessel at the beginning and at the end of his life. His father, Franz Hessel, was a writer and poet who had had a Jewish upbringing but who raised his children in polytheism. He had a passion for Ancient Greek religion and mythology and even attempted to translate *The Odyssey* into German. Consequently, Stéphane Hessel grew wary of monotheistic religions:

³⁸² Sylvie Crossman from Indigène Editions, interviewed on 18 September 2014.

³⁸³ Hessel, *Tous comptes faits...ou Presque*, p.24.

Malheureusement, les religions sont souvent monothéistes, et les religions monothéistes deviennent facilement dangereuses. J'aime la mythologie grecque, où il y a des dieux pour tout. Et c'est d'ailleurs la mythologie qui a donné le plus de prise à la culture. C'est quand même formidable que nous vivions encore sur les bases de cette culture fondée au V^e siècle avant J.-C., une culture de compromis, de balancements. Le christianisme, le judaïsme, l'islam ont produit aussi beaucoup de chefs-d'œuvre, mais il y a une violence contenue. Il y a ceux qui sont dans le bien et ceux qui n'y sont pas, et c'est grave!³⁸⁴

Ancient Greek philosophers also caught Hessel's attention. He never became a philosopher in the sense that he never developed his own doctrine, but like Socrates, he favoured dialogue over writing. In fact, Manfred Flügge, who followed Hessel's career, pointed out that Hessel's successive publishers played the role of Plato putting the orator's word into writing.³⁸⁵ Sometimes, especially in *Indignez-vous!*, the publisher's influence could really be felt. In the context of the global crisis that started in 2008, Hessel believed it was time for everyone to revive the ancient philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, Heraclites and Parmenides because it had brought core universal values. Hessel often liked to quote the first article of the *Universal Declaration* of Human Rights because it reflected those universal values:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

The philosopher Peter Sloterdijk even used Hessel's pamphlet as a basis to develop his view on the origins of philosophy in *You must change your life* (2012). He believes that, in antiquity, philosophy was born out of indignation and disappointment, and led to wisdom and resignation, but was progressively replaced by religious intelligence. According to him, the French Revolution allowed a return to a philosophy that interpreted modern disappointments and, this time, refused resignation.³⁸⁶ Hessel also believed disappointment was the driving force of *engagement*.

³⁸⁴ Stéphane Hessel, interviewed by Nicolas Roméas, 'Stéphane Hessel : « Les hommes ont besoin de la culture »', *Rue 89*, 30 March 2013 <<http://rue89.nouvelobs.com/rue89-culture/2013/03/30/stephane-hessel-les-hommes-ont-besoin-culture-240875>> [accessed 1 October 2016]

³⁸⁵ Flügge, *Stéphane Hessel- Portrait d'un rebelle heureux*, p.261.

³⁸⁶ Hessel, *Tous comptes faits...ou Presque*, p.125.

The rue d'Ulm also greatly influenced Hessel. In 1937, when Hessel entered the ENS, Hegel's philosophy was dominant. The latter understood History as a succession of logical events conducted by leaders towards a collective end. According to Hegel, History was driven by Reason, men were driven by passion, and therefore passion was an instrument of universal Reason.³⁸⁷ With the Second World War, Hessel would soon reject Hegel's theory of History:

Au terme d'une logique qui met un terme à toutes les logiques, Hegel nous dit que nous allons quelque part, que l'Histoire a un sens. Or l'Histoire que nous avons vécue lors de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale nous a appris que tout cet édifice métaphysique ne tenait pas debout.³⁸⁸

This realization also partly explains why Hessel would decide to write his essay on Kierkegaard to pass his post-graduate degree in philosophy after the War. Kierkegaard was diametrically opposed to Hegel in the sense that he believed that the trajectory of the individual prevailed over collective destiny.

At the ENS, Hessel was particularly interested in the phenomenology taught by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as opposed to Edmund Husserl's initial conception of phenomenology. If phenomenology is the study of experience through the different perceptions of the actors in a given situation, the next generation of philosophers broke away from Husserl's early work. While Husserl explained the relation of the self with the surrounding world through structures of consciousness – does the phenomenon exist independently from the self? –, Merleau-Ponty placed the “body” at the centre of the experience, being both the “body-subject” and “body-object”. In this context, Stéphane Hessel could only interpret Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology as an appeal to *engagement*, an exhortation to link mind and body, reason and action, thinking and doing. Hessel was starting to distance himself from the academic frame to find inspiration in philosophical literature:

J'y découvrais des complexités nouvelles, qui fouillaient l'horizon bien au-delà des allées bien ratissées de la philosophie scolaire. La lecture de *La Nausée*, puis du *Mur*, de Sartre, celle de *Lumière d'août*, de Faulkner, de *La Verge d'Aaron*, de D.H. Lawrence, de *Manhattan Transfer*, de Dos Pasos, du *Procès* et du *Château*, de Kafka, et d'*Ulysse*, de Joyce, pour ne citer que les plus saisissantes, mettaient plus fortement en cause pour moi les paramètres de notre société que les textes de Hegel, de Kierkegaard et de Husserl. Bien

³⁸⁷ Hélène Soumet, *Le Petit Larousse des Grands Philosophes*, (Paris: Larousse, 2013), pp.205-206.

³⁸⁸ Stéphane Hessel, *Ma philosophie et dialogue avec Edgar Morin, Entretiens avec Nicolas Truong*, (Paris, Editions de l'aube, 2013), p.183.

plus, l'initiateur incomparable de la phénoménologie qu'a été pour moi, dans les jardins de la rue d'Ulm, Maurice Merleau-Ponty nous délivrait de l'abstraction autant que des dogmes. Son enseignement explorait l'expérience la plus concrète, celle du corps et de ses relations avec *le* sens, grand singulier face au pluriel des sens.³⁸⁹

Even though Hessel was more predisposed towards a Cartesian and phenomenological philosophy of experience and sense, inculcated by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty – as opposed to the philosophy of knowledge, concept and rationality explored by Bachelard, Cavaillès or Canguilhem – the ENS was preparing him for literary and academic circles. At this stage of his life, he could not envisage working for the United Nations or the French government:

Ni mes maîtres, ni ma famille, ni les milieux dans lesquels j'évoluais ne me laissaient imaginer que je pourrais sortir un jour de cette communauté très littéraire, qui faisait ses délices de ses tourments, une communauté d'explorateurs de l'humain et non de bâtisseurs du social.³⁹⁰

And how could it have been otherwise, given that he was raised by artistic parents in Paris, among avant-garde high profile figures, and now studying philosophy at the ENS at the age of 22? Hessel may have had limited agency at this stage of his life but reading about Sartre's idea of individual responsibility and Merleau-Ponty's hands-on philosophy certainly triggered his diplomatic ambitions. He considered Sartre and Merleau-Ponty as innovative. Hessel felt the need to break away from the classic intellectual:

Je leur [his comrades killed in the camps] dois un engagement, en souvenir de ce que nous a enseigné Sartre: en effet, je suis d'une génération qui, pendant la guerre, tout en étant antimilitariste, a voulu se battre, a rejoint le général de Gaulle parce qu'il continuait à se battre, et a fortement subi l'influence philosophique d'un engagement dépassant d'une certaine façon la morale classique. Il ne s'agit pas d'être bon ou de faire le bien, mais de mener une vie qui ait de la signification et qui porte une responsabilité, ce qui n'est pas tout à fait la même chose. Cela conduit à choisir la difficulté plutôt que l'épicurisme.³⁹¹

Hessel looked up to Sartre because he chose to defend his own causes, no matter whether they were well perceived or not. Hessel later admitted that he had

³⁸⁹ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, p.40.

³⁹⁰ Ibid, p.41.

³⁹¹ Hessel, *Citoyen sans frontières*, p.85.

sometimes felt trapped by the causes he supported and made faux pas like Sartre, but he still placed himself on the same side as the philosopher.³⁹² For example, they both justified the use of counter-violence at some point in their careers: Sartre, in the preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, went further than Fanon and encouraged the colonized people to kill the European colonizers in Algeria; Hessel, in *Indignez-vous!* defended Hamas against Israel, as will be seen later in this chapter.

Despite this common ground between the philosopher and the diplomat, Manfred Flügge highlights fundamental differences between the two men:

Concernant Sartre qu'il aime invoquer ("Je me vois un peu dans sa succession"), certes au nom de l'engagement, cela semble compréhensible, mais n'est pas convaincant sur le fond. [...] Une notion comme l'espérance n'est pas du tout sartrienne, de même qu'une certaine façon de parler d'identité et d'origines. Hessel n'est pas existentialiste dans le sens sartrien du terme.³⁹³

Hessel seems to have shown self-determination on numerous occasions: his non-adherence to Marxism and Marechalism, his choice to leave a promising career at the Quai d'Orsay, his condemnation of Israel's governments, his support for the Green Party and for the Socialist Party, etc. He seems to have made a lot of decisions against the establishment, the proprieties of society or even the definition of "intellectual".

Raymond Aron and Hessel, despite their similar profiles, never worked together. At the end of his life, Hessel was often asked during interviews why he had always kept his distance from Aron. First of all, at the rue d'Ulm, Hessel was never taught by Aron who taught in Saint-Cloud. Besides, he taught sociology whereas Hessel studied philosophy. Hessel considered Sartre and Merleau-Ponty as innovative, whereas Raymond Aron embodied conservatism to him³⁹⁴. They only met in London where they rallied to De Gaulle's Free French Forces. Aron quickly questioned De Gaulle's legitimacy, whereas Hessel gave the General his full support during the War:

³⁹² Hessel, *Tous comptes faits...ou Presque*, p.121.

³⁹³ Flügge, *Stéphane Hessel- Portrait d'un rebelle heureux*, p.263.

³⁹⁴ Hessel, *Citoyen sans frontières*, p.46.

J'en veux à Raymond Aron parce que c'est quand même une personnalité importante. Je l'ai rencontré sur Piccadilly au moment où Darlan avait quitté la France et était venu proposer aux Américains de travailler avec eux, je lui dis: c'est affreux, Darlan, nous n'allons pas nous réjouir qu'il soit auprès des Américains ! Il m'a dit: attention, Darlan a derrière lui la flotte française. La flotte française est plus importante pour les alliés que les quelques armées que le Général de Gaulle a. Eh bien, ça, je ne le lui pardonne pas. J'ai beaucoup d'admiration pour lui, sa fille est une amie, mais attention, là, je trouve qu'il a déraillé. Nous autres, nous étions convaincus que le Général était un démocrate, qu'il avait confiance en René Cassin pour être un républicain. Par conséquent, il fallait le suivre et pas l'attaquer.³⁹⁵

However, in very changed circumstances, Hessel created the Club Jean Moulin with Daniel Cordier after the return to power of General de Gaulle in May 1958, which they regarded as illegitimate. Even after he changed his mind on De Gaulle, Hessel never reached out to Aron and always considered his support for Darlan as a betrayal. After the War, they both rejected Marxism and Aron even wrote *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (1955). They both stood for the independence of Algeria, for which Aron wrote *Tragédie algérienne* (1957). They both remained outside of politics but were very attentive to international relations. They had a career outside academia – diplomacy for Hessel and journalism for Aron, although the latter was also an academic. Still, their modes of intervention remained very different. Hessel was an orator. Aron felt more comfortable when writing:

Quant à moi, je crois plus simplement que je n'ai jamais possédé les qualités nécessaires à l'exercice du pouvoir, même au niveau de conseiller. Prudent dans mes écrits, je contrôle mal mes propos. Je me laisse aller à des formules extrêmes, de circonstance ou d'humeur, qui n'expriment pas ma pensée profonde et qui risquent de la discréditer. L'homme politique doit tenir sa langue autant que sa plume. Je ne suis pas incapable d'adapter mes paroles à mon interlocuteur, mais le langage diplomatique m'est pénible.[...]

Je n'ai rêvé ni d'un ministère, ni d'une ambassade, ni moins encore d'un fauteuil dans un conseil prestigieux.³⁹⁶

Aron's comment indirectly gives credit to Hessel's skills, revealing the difficulty of diplomatic action. In the end, they each in their own ways embodied a new intellectual during and after the Sartre era, turned towards the international community, with new forms of intervention.

³⁹⁵ Stéphane Hessel, interviewed by Laure Adler for the radio program *Hors Champs* on France Culture, 5 April 2010.

³⁹⁶ Raymond Aron, *Mémoires*, (Paris: Editions Julliard, 1983), p.741.

Edgar Morin became Hessel's theoretical reference to face global modern challenges. Hessel and Morin met at the beginning of the 1980s but only started working together in 2011, after the publication of *Indignez-vous!* Morin helped Hessel answer the criticisms about his lack of solutions to the social and economic problems that he had raised in the pamphlet. They wrote two books together, *Le Chemin de l'espérance* (2011) and *Hessel: Ma philosophie et dialogue avec Edgar Morin* (2013). Morin never said a word about Hessel in his memoirs published in 2013; therefore Morin perhaps had more impact on Hessel than versa vice. The diplomat and the sociologist were only four years apart in age, were both in the Resistance and were men of the Left. They both strike us as being interdisciplinary intellectuals and advocated more transdisciplinarity to reform society:

Partout est reconnue la nécessité de l'interdisciplinarité en attendant qu'on reconnaisse celle de la transdisciplinarité que ce soit pour l'étude de la santé, de la vieillesse, de l'architecture [...]

Mais la transdisciplinarité n'est une solution que dans le cadre d'une pensée complexe. Il faut substituer une pensée qui relie à une pensée qui disjoint [...] ³⁹⁷

Hessel related to Morin's philosophy, which broke away from Hegel's absolute truth. Morin defended a truth of the mind. He worked on the concept of "metamorphosis" according to which society, when reaching saturation point, preserves its heritage while innovating and reinventing itself ³⁹⁸. Once again, it is easy to understand why Hessel, who dreaded the idea of a revolution, adhered to Morin's less radical "renaissance". Morin's main work had been *La Méthode*, written in six volumes between 1977 and 2004. It received positive reviews in 1977 in the context of a general disillusionment with Marxism, communism and structuralism. In 2011, Hessel and Morin's *Le Chemin de l'Espérance* was also born out of disillusionment with Capitalism and Europe. The two authors introduced the concept of "Terre-patrie", the feeling of belonging to the international community, while preserving the diversity of national communities. As discussed in BHL's case study, one of the reasons why twenty-first century intellectuals have broken away from the classic

³⁹⁷ Edgar Morin and Stéphane Hessel, *Le Chemin de l'espérance*, (Paris: Fayard, 2011), p.51.

³⁹⁸ Edgar Morin, *Vers l'abîme?*, (Paris: Editions L'Herne, 2007).

intellectual is that their *engagement* is now global, as opposed to Zola's *sursaut républicain*.

Even if *Le Chemin de l'espérance* was co-authored with Morin, we can clearly distinguish the UN diplomat's influence between the lines, where most solutions offered to overcome "la Grande Crise d'une humanité qui n'arrive pas à accéder à l'Humanité"³⁹⁹ are the creation of more international institutions. Still, Hessel obviously managed to draw his own conclusions from his diplomatic career and called for a transformation of development assistance:

De même devons-nous indiquer que la formule standardisée du développement ignore les solidarités, les savoirs et savoir-faire des sociétés traditionnelles, et qu'il faut repenser et diversifier le développement de façon à ce qu'il préserve les solidarités propres aux enveloppements communautaires.⁴⁰⁰

The third part of this chapter will allow us to evaluate Hessel's successes and failures while exercising diplomacy as well as resorting to other forms of action.

Hessel's modes of intervention

Hessel opted for preventative diplomacy after the Second World War, instead of embracing the academic path, because he saw this concrete *engagement* as a duty to the victims of Nazism. More specifically, Hessel would dedicate 40 years of his life to preventative diplomacy and assistance programs in developing countries, mainly Algeria and Sub-Saharan countries. Hessel criticized American liberal views on "development" and warned of a misconception of the term:

Le mot "développement" est à prendre avec précaution. Il ne s'agit pas d'imposer à tel peuple qui n'en disposerait pas encore les moyens de production et d'exploitation des ressources que nous, les pays du Nord, industrialisés, nous avons utilisés pour nous amener au point de domination économique.⁴⁰¹

At the end of his career, he advocated a two-way relationship between developed and developing countries and urged to take in consideration the potential of the population and the systems and facilities already in place. He claimed that he had

³⁹⁹ Morin and Hessel, *Le Chemin de l'espérance*, p.8.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid, p.13.

⁴⁰¹ Hessel, *Engagez-vous!*, p.25.

met more failures than successes as a diplomat. His views on the UN became more critical as the UN Security Council was often blocked by the unanimity rule of the 5 permanent members. He called for a reform of the UN:

Paradoxe: cette institution des Nations Unies qui se veut garante du droit international, dans laquelle j'ai tant travaillé, vécu, et au développement de laquelle j'ai tâché de contribuer, cette institution apparaît trop souvent comme le lieu par excellence de tous les blocages du droit des peuples. C'est pour cela qu'il faut la réformer! Et en profondeur, en tenant compte de la nouvelle distribution de la puissance dans le monde: l'Inde, le Japon, le Brésil, d'autres pays encore, démontrent chaque jour que la composition du Conseil de Sécurité est périmée.⁴⁰²

Moreover, Hessel struggled to work alternately for the UN and for the French Ministries because this implied defending different, and sometimes contradictory, interests. Between 1951 and 1954, when working as an executive officer in the social affairs department of the UN, Hessel defended the role of this new organization and fought for human rights, but a few years later in the French ministry of Foreign Affairs, he was asked to defend France's position in Algeria at a time when De Gaulle still wanted to keep the empire:

Plus tard, quand je rentre du Vietnam, en 1957, on m'affecte au service de coopération technique au ministère des Affaires étrangères, et là j'accompagne Christian Pineau, ministre des Affaires étrangères, qui va en Amérique du Sud plaider la cause de la présence française en Algérie.

Pour la première fois, je suis vraiment en porte-à-faux. J'exécute une mission officielle visant à demander aux pays de ce sous-continent de ne pas voter contre la France aux Nations Unies. On me colle des décorations parce que j'accompagne le ministre, et je suis censé convaincre nos interlocuteurs que si l'Algérie verse dans l'indépendance, les communistes prendront le pouvoir et ce sera au profit de l'Union soviétique! Donc, protégeons ensemble la démocratie!⁴⁰³

Hessel was in favour of the decolonization of Algeria, but he would only voice his opinion from July 1958, through the Club Jean Moulin's charter. According to the French model, Hessel cherished the legacy of the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* as much as he despised French Jacobinism. He was asked to write many reports on field situations, but his observations often went against the pretexts for France's indecision or inaction. In the end, the reports were unpublished

⁴⁰² Hessel, *Tous comptes faits...ou Presque*, p.140.

⁴⁰³ Hessel, *Citoyen sans frontières*, pp.121-122.

and Hessel grew frustrated by the counterproductive political system. He came to realize that politicians faced the same dilemmas as intellectuals:

Quand Emmanuel Kant affirme que l'homme a besoin d'un maître, il ne veut pas dire que les gens sont des veaux ou des moutons sans autonomie ni esprit critique – il nous rappelle seulement le paradoxe du pouvoir politique, du pouvoir juste, soumis à la tension entre l'universalisme des valeurs qui doivent l'inspirer et les tendances égoïstes de chaque individu. Il nous rappelle que la tâche fondamentale de tout maître, c'est l'émancipation. A l'école comme en politique.⁴⁰⁴

Consequently, Hessel's initial views on emancipation were based on Kant's theory: the master breaks the individuals' will and forces them to obey a universally valid will, which gives them their freedom.⁴⁰⁵ This explains why Hessel always relied on international law to solve conflicts. However, the master – or in this context, the politician - is also an individual prone to selfishness who sometimes puts his personal interests before universal values. Hessel worked for the Ministry of National Education as Head of Cooperation in Paris and across Africa between 1958 and 1963 and then as a plenipotentiary minister of overseas development at the embassy in Algiers between 1964 and 1968. During these 10 years, Hessel's theoretical knowledge was challenged in the sense that his interlocutors had their own ways of applying universal values, such as freedom, equality and justice. The examples of Algeria and Senegal will illustrate this point.

Hessel himself contributed towards the improvement of education systems in the French-speaking world which he provided with 35 000 teachers, where local teachers had not yet been trained.⁴⁰⁶ He was convinced that a bilingual younger generation would modernize Algeria. So in the 1970s, he deplored the fact that the arabization of teaching in this country had pushed away French academics such as André Mandouze, Rector of the University of Algiers, and Jean Delanglade, philosophy professor at the University of Annaba. For Hessel, Algerian emancipation from France did not mean the eradication of French culture and language.

Nevertheless, he was in favour of an independent education system in Algeria and in newly independent sub-Saharan countries, which would suit the needs of

⁴⁰⁴ Hessel, *Tous comptes faits...ou Presque*, p.117.

⁴⁰⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.46.

⁴⁰⁶ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, p.168.

these local economies. In Senegal, Hessel suggested that more farming schools should be created in order to develop its agriculture but he claimed that Léopold Senghor had declined the idea as he believed Senegal deserved a similar higher education system to that of France.⁴⁰⁷ Hessel feared the creation of an elite indifferent to the problems of its country and incapable of solving them.

For Algeria, the emancipation of education from France meant developing an Arabic-speaking education. For Senegal, emancipation of education from France meant developing a network of universities. These two examples show how different the intellectual's theoretical concept of emancipation was from situations in the field. Hessel was more and more disappointed by France's foreign policy in Africa and by African heads of state. He always maintained a distant relationship with politics, but he expressed some regrets at the end of his career:

Où était, dans tout cela le combat politique, l'engagement personnel sur un front exposé? [...] J'admets bien qu'il n'y a pas de démocratie sans Parlement, pas de Parlement sans partis, pas de partis sans appareils. Alors? Suffit-il de laisser ce travail aux autres et de se réserver le droit de dénoncer leurs insuffisances ou leur goût du pouvoir et de ses privilèges? N'aurait-il pas fallu en être pour toucher du doigt les limites et les possibilités de cet exercice? ⁴⁰⁸

To all these questions, he eventually answered in 2008 that diplomats serving their countries could not be political activists themselves.⁴⁰⁹ Instead, when he retired from diplomacy, he would take part in several clubs and associations, such as "Collectif Roosevelt", to formulate reforms and influence political leaders. In this way, Hessel and the other intellectuals working with him acted as political advisers, without risking subordinating their universal values to any political candidate or party.

Civic engagement via cercles de pensée became a way for Hessel to pursue his *engagement* even after his diplomatic career. Working on behalf of clubs and associations allowed him to continue to liaise with international organizations such as the UN. He distinguished clubs, where a couple of dozen people thought about solutions to tackle global issues, from associations that intervened on the ground. Debating and publishing within a network of intellectuals, entrepreneurs and high-ranking civil servants gave weight to the convictions that he had tried defending

⁴⁰⁷ Hessel, *Citoyen sans frontières*, p.144.

⁴⁰⁸ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, pp.135-136.

⁴⁰⁹ Hessel, *Citoyen sans frontières*, p.195.

alone as a diplomat. He found a form of engagement that matched the fast pace of his career. His openness to these circles contrasted sharply with BHL's suspicion of the term "network":

[...] je pense que nous vivons dans un monde d'interdépendances dans lequel les changements ne peuvent intervenir que tous ensemble. Cela implique une solidarité. Concrètement, cette solidarité prend corps dans les réseaux nombreux et de plus en plus denses d'organisations civiques, de défense des droits de l'homme, de lutte pour le développement.⁴¹⁰

Hessel had already encouraged this idea of interdependence during his diplomatic career every time he tried to establish partnerships between countries. On top of adopting a different form of *engagement*, he now also defended another cause, aside from human rights: the environment. Following in the footsteps of the writer and environmentalist Nicolas Hulot, Hessel showed his support for his friends Daniel Cohn-Bendit and José Bové who were members of the green party Europe Ecologie. Hessel's interest in the protection of the environment can be traced back to his participation in the 1972 UN conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm and has been confirmed through the *Collegium International éthique, scientifique et politique* and the *Collectif Roosevelt*, the associations that he respectively co-founded in 2002 and 2012 to find solutions to the economic, social and environmental challenges of our time. Hessel was also a member of the French NGO Agrisud that helps creating small agricultural businesses in Africa, Asia and South America. Therefore, his concern for ecology was central to his *engagement* in the last forty years of his life:

Plus tard, j'ai compris qu'au-delà de ces problèmes touchant aux droits de l'homme, celui de la nature, celui de l'environnement, avaient une importance au moins aussi grande. Aujourd'hui je vois donc l'avenir comme devant respecter à égalité les droits de la personne humaine et les droits de la nature. C'est un changement dans ma perception, c'est une adjonction.⁴¹¹

Even if his candidacy was symbolical - he stood as an ineligible candidate - in the 2010 regional elections, Hessel used his public status to draw attention to the preservation of the planet and elicit a response from the Left at the same time. He gave his support to François Hollande in the 2012 presidential election for the same

⁴¹⁰ Hessel, *Engagez-vous!*, pp.57-58.

⁴¹¹ Stéphane Hessel, *Engagez-vous!*, p.64

reasons. Hessel regarded himself as a socialist but never found it necessary to join a party because he considered that topics such as the environment and social justice transcended any party.⁴¹²

Hessel was still a diplomat when he formed his first club in 1958 but he would join most of his 12 clubs and associations after he retired and until 2012. He founded the Club Jean Moulin with Daniel Cordier, Moulin's personal secretary during the war, to contest De Gaulle's return to power. They had been Gaullists during the Resistance, but now they saw the RPF as a nationalist and reactionary party. In July 1958, they signed collectively a charter calling for republican civism, a democratic utopia as described by Claire Andrieu⁴¹³, in order to give a sense of responsibility to citizens. In this document, they wrote about the right of a country to self-determination in general, but remained quite vague about Algeria and the interlocutor that they acknowledged. It seems that Hessel and his club had not cut the umbilical cord with De Gaulle during the first year of the Club:

Un autre signe d'autodessaisissement relatif, de la part du club, est l'absence, jusqu'au lendemain du discours du 16 septembre [1959 – De Gaulle's speech offered Algeria the recourse to self-determination], de tout numéro du *Bulletin* qui portât sur la guerre d'Algérie.⁴¹⁴

Later, in their *Bulletin* and in *Le Monde*, they mainly discussed decolonization, the reform of democratic institutions in France and the construction of an economic and political Europe. They spoke collectively for the businessmen and high-ranking civil servants who could not take a political public stand owing to their status. After De Gaulle's speech, they wanted to make metropolitan France aware of torture in Algeria. They used rallying terms such as "le drame algérien" and "le sursaut de l'esprit public"⁴¹⁵. It is impossible to evaluate how much Hessel contributed to the Club as they only produced collective publications, but his influence could sometimes be read between the lines. For example, when the Club recommended that France open negotiations with Algeria at the UN, one could imagine that the ex-

⁴¹² Ibid, pp.42-43.

⁴¹³ Claire Andrieu, *Pour l'amour de la République – Le Club Jean Moulin 1958-1970*, (Paris: Fayard, 2002).

⁴¹⁴ Ibid, p.324.

⁴¹⁵ Bulletin du Club Jean Moulin, *Une nouvelle entreprise contre l'homme*, 9 (November 1959).

diplomat could have been behind this suggestion. In 1962, the Club was in favour of an Algerian Algeria that worked closely with France:

L'économie algérienne est beaucoup plus dépendante de l'économie française que celle du Maroc ou de la Tunisie. L'association peut lui apporter en effet trois éléments d'équilibre pratiquement irremplaçables: l'aide et l'assistance technique; un marché où s'écoulent 85% de la production algérienne (notamment le vin, les agrumes, le pétrole, qui trouveraient plus difficilement preneurs à l'étranger); un débouché d'emploi qui procure aux ménages musulmans près de 10% de leurs revenus.⁴¹⁶

Clearly, the Club was not in favour of separation from France. If the Club Jean Moulin defended human rights and democracy, it also defended France's economic interests. Under Georges Pompidou and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Hessel would join another club that defended France's economic as well as social interests, but this time they looked towards innovations, not towards France's past. The club, created by Jacques Delors in 1973, was called Echanges et Projets. Together they published *La révolution du temps choisi* (Albin Michel, 1980), in which they advocated a better allocation of time between work and social relationships. This had a real influence on politics since it became the 35-hour working week in the Socialist Party's 1981 electoral program, adopted in 2000.

From 1976 onwards, Hessel dedicated himself to the question of immigration in France. After Hessel failed in negotiations to free a French archeologist from Chadian rebels, Giscard d'Estaing did not want him to work for the Ministry of Cooperation anymore. Instead, he was offered the presidency of the Office National pour la Promotion Culturelle des Immigrés in 1976 and then Michel Rocard asked him to work for the Haut Conseil à l'Intégration in 1990. The successive creations of these organizations show an evolution in the management of immigration in France. The first organization emerged at the end of "the Glorious Thirty", when unemployment and a low wage labour and temporary migration increased. From 1972, the granting of a residence permit required the applicant's work permit. Immigrants were eventually encouraged to return to their home country:

En 1976, nous récusions aussi bien l'intégration que l'assimilation: nous recherchions l'insertion. [...] Donner aux étrangers qui séjournent temporairement en France à la fois l'accès à la culture française et le moyen de maintenir, individuellement et collectivement, leurs liens avec leur patrie, sa

⁴¹⁶ Club Jean Moulin, *Deux pièces du dossier Algérie – Sur une politique du rapatriement – La solidarité économique franco-algérienne*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1962), p.13.

langue, ses traditions, ses coutumes, ses arts et ses lettres, de manière à ce qu'à leur retour ils ne soient ni dépayés ni aliénés, c'est ce qu'on désigne par le terme "insertion".⁴¹⁷

The Office was in charge of a television program called *Mosaïque*, which promoted immigrants' cultures to the French population, but it remained the fact that many immigrants lived on the margins and were victims of racism. From 1981 with François Mitterrand's victory in the presidential elections, foreigners were granted the right of association and community radios appeared. The Haut Conseil à l'Intégration advised the Prime Minister Michel Rocard on the efficiency of France's policies on migration for settlement purposes. They drew his attention to the ghettoization and discrimination of immigrants.⁴¹⁸ Hessel's *engagement* intensified when he became the spokesman of another association called Le Collège des médiateurs. As often happened, Hessel claimed that he was appointed to the position without being consulted, because of his age, experience and title of Ambassador of France. With the help of other ex-resistants like Germaine Tillon, Lucie and Raymond Aubrac and Edgar Morin, he asked for the regularization of 300 *sans-papiers* who had taken shelter in a Parisian theatre. Their demand was rejected. Hessel ended his autobiography on this failure but he saw mediation as an ongoing process, not an end in itself:

Il n'y a pas de médiation réussie. Mais chacune, par son échec même, ouvre la voie à une autre, plus large, qui va échouer à son tour. C'est par leur enchaînement inlassable que s'écrit l'histoire courageuse de notre espèce.⁴¹⁹

Mediation was at the core of Hessel's diplomatic career. It implied an awareness of the situation and of conflicting parties, a negotiation – most of the time in the name of universal values – and a result, which raises the question of the efficiency and limits of the *engagement*. Hessel's objective was ultimately to be actively involved in defending a cause and make it visible to the people and government, no matter the outcome. According to the film-producer Sacha Goldman, Hessel's driving force was

⁴¹⁷ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, pp.216-217.

⁴¹⁸ Direction de l'information légale et administrative, *Immigration et intégration*: <http://www.vie-publique.fr/politiques-publiques/politique-immigration/immigres-cite/> [accessed 1 October 2016]

⁴¹⁹ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, p.313.

the intervention in itself. He opposed Hessel to Primo Levi. He believed that Levi had given in to despair after the Second World War, while Hessel had transformed his experience into activism.⁴²⁰ He was pushed by a certain voluntarism:

La dialectique existentielle de Stéphane Hessel était de gagner en perdant. Comme pour Jean Daniel, il lui était “plus facile d’avoir tort avec Sartre que d’avoir raison dans la morosité avec Aron”. La dynamique “d’y aller” lui allait mieux que la dynamique de s’aligner et de chercher la facilité des causes évidentes.⁴²¹

For Sartre, mediation was also at the core of literature, but it was more of an internal mediation for the individual, as opposed to ‘between’ individuals:

Je dirais qu'un écrivain est engagé lorsqu'il tâche de prendre la conscience la plus entière d'être embarqué, c'est-à-dire lorsqu'il fait passer pour lui et pour les autres, l'engagement de la spontanéité immédiate au réfléchi. L'écrivain est médiateur par excellence et son engagement, c'est la médiation.⁴²²

Sartre implied here that writers were the quintessential mediators in society whereas Hessel conceived mediation as a collective enterprise, empowering the people:

J’ai été de toutes ces entreprises, en dépit du scepticisme de ceux qui n’y voyaient que bavardages entre porteurs des mêmes convictions, sans prise sur la marche réelle des affaires du monde et sur l’évolution concrète de la société. Et pourtant il s’y façonne progressivement un “nous” qui refuse de s’enfermer dans le monde tel qu’il est et concentre son regard sur celui à construire.⁴²³

Hessel’s desire to mobilize public opinion and politics became more global within the International Ethical, Political and Scientific Collegium that he created in 2002 with Michel Rocard, Milan Kučan who was still the President of Slovenia at the time, and Sacha Goldman. The Collegium was distinctive because it gathered philosophers, scientists as well as present or former Heads of state over the five continents. After the New York attacks of September 2001, it aimed at being attentive to civil society’s expectations and using soft power to influence the decision makers on environmental, economic and ethical challenges in order to give humanity a

⁴²⁰ Sacha Goldman, in Gilles Vanderpooten, *Stéphane Hessel, Irrésistible optimiste*, (Paris: L’Aube, 2013), p.97.

⁴²¹ Ibid, p.100.

⁴²² Sartre, *Qu’est-ce que la littérature?*, p.98.

⁴²³ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, pp.157-158.

collective direction. It highlighted limited capacity of individual sovereign states to tackle global issues. Hessel's goal was to convince the UN of the necessity of such a group in the context of globalization. The Collegium's *Universal Declaration of interdependence* was presented to Kofi Annan on 24th October 2005, on the 60th anniversary of the UN. Its first priority was to remind states and intergovernmental organizations of the lack of orientation and responsibility in their decisions:

[...] there is an increasing deficit of responsibility: as globalization occurs, power is concentrated, but responsibility becomes diluted. Today, effective power is disseminated between economic, political, media, social, cultural, intellectual and religious players, without clearly predetermining the conditions and means of their responsibility with regard to the peoples and citizens concerned.⁴²⁴

This declaration echoed Hessel's attachment to the concepts of interdependence and individual responsibility that he had defended throughout his career. The Collegium still exists today through papers, forums and conferences and defends the necessity of global governance – not a global government. This also ties in with the concept of “Terre-patrie”, the feeling of belonging to the international community, while preserving the diversity of national communities, defended by Morin and Hessel.

Hessel took part in several other groups but the examples selected in this chapter – Club Jean Moulin, Echanges et Projets, Office National pour la Promotion Culturelle des Immigrés, Haut Conseil à l'Intégration, Collège des médiateurs, International Ethical, Political and Scientific Collegium – reveal an evolution of his role and convictions, from the defense of national social and economic interests to the defense of immigration and international community. The transformation of his form of *engagement* bears witness to his adaptability to globalization, and consequently to his relevance as an intellectual in the 21st century. Although Hessel was an environmentalist, he was not opposed to globalization:

Il faut à la fois mondialiser et démondialiser. [...] Nous proposons de perpétuer et de développer tout ce que la mondialisation apporte d'intersolidarités et de fécondités culturelles, mais dans le même temps, nous proposons de restituer

⁴²⁴ International Ethical, Political and Scientific Collegium, *Universal Declaration of interdependence*, presented to the UN general secretary Kofi Annan on 24 October 2005.

au local, au régional, au national des autonomies vitales, et de sauvegarder et favoriser partout les diversités culturelles.⁴²⁵

For Hessel, a successful globalization meant a strict control of finance capitalism, the development of a green and solidarity-based economy, but also sharing the moral and spiritual values of different civilizations, such as Asian wisdoms.

The importance of poetry, for a man so anchored in economics and politics, with a very pragmatic approach to reforms, seems incongruous. And yet, this was Hessel's favourite literary form.⁴²⁶ He mainly recited the poetry of others, although he is said to have written poems, which have not been published. It represented first of all a link with his parents. His mother taught him his first poems by Rainer Maria Riike whom she had met in Munich and then Paris. Hessel liked to recite poems to his mother to get her attention and please her. Besides, Hessel's father was a poet who liked to write about mythology. According to his friend Edgar Morin, poetry was more than Hessel's hobby; it was the fuel of his *engagement*.

C'était cette poésie qui le faisait vivre et qui le rendait capable de s'émerveiller.

Mais justement, dans sa capacité d'émerveiller et d'aimer, il puisait l'énergie et la force de se révolter contre les horreurs de ce monde, contre les indignités, contre les cruautés, contre les dominations. Et c'est ça, je pense, qui est le lien le plus extraordinaire dans sa nature. Le figer dans un personnage d'indigné est une vision unilatérale.⁴²⁷

Morin was referring here to Hessel's pamphlet *Indignez-vous!* for which he received a lot of praise but also criticisms that his approach to the financial crisis was not reflective, but impulsive. We can add to Morin's explanation by saying that *engagement*, philosophy and poetry were complementary for Hessel. Philosophy was the link between a contemplative life, in the form of poetry for example, and an active life, in the form of *engagement*.⁴²⁸ Or, to put it differently, his *engagement* was the expression of what inhabited him: passion (poetry) and reason (philosophy).

⁴²⁵ Morin and Hessel, *Le Chemin de l'espérance*, p.12.

⁴²⁶ Stéphane Hessel, *Entretiens avec Nicolas Truong, Ma philosophie et dialogue avec Edgar Morin*, (Paris: Editions de l'aube, 2013), p.25.

⁴²⁷ Edgar Morin, in Gilles Vanderpooten, *Irrésistible optimiste*, (Paris: L'aube, 2013), p.184.

⁴²⁸ Hessel, *Tous comptes faits...ou Presque*, p.30.

Moreover, he believed poetry carried the ideas of beauty and freedom, and could therefore bring people together:

[...] je constate, avec beaucoup de plaisir, que nous vivons dans un monde de plus en plus interconnecté en matière d'art, de musique, de peinture, ce qui me conforte plutôt dans l'idée qu'il y a de l'universel révélé dans l'art, né de cette aspiration à la beauté que nous avons en partage.

Alors, lorsqu'on se demande quelle vie est digne d'être vécue, quelle vie est "bonne", pour reprendre la question d'Aristote, on ne peut se contenter de répondre qu'il faut être responsable et s'engager. Il faut aussi prendre en compte l'extraordinaire diversité et la place de l'imaginaire, l'art et la poésie, sans laquelle cet effort que l'on fait quand on est de nouveau vivant, quand on "renaît" après avoir été presque mort, n'aurait guère de sens. On ne peut séparer le vécu, l'action et la méditation.⁴²⁹

To echo Sartre's *Existentialism is a humanism*, we could go as far as to say that poetry was a humanism for Hessel, in the sense that it enabled his self-fulfillment. It worked upon his mind but also upon his body during difficult situations, such as his detention in Buchenwald:

Cet art de la brièveté était selon lui une pensée incarnée, par gros temps ces fragments sus par cœur façonnaient son esprit, c'est-à-dire son corps. L'esprit et le corps, deux entités d'ordinaire séparées qui n'en font qu'une dans le monisme hessélien.⁴³⁰

According to Manfred Flügge, Hessel also used poems as radio codes and aide-mémoire in the *Résistance*.⁴³¹ There was definitely a 'collector' side to Hessel: learning by heart poems allowed him to appropriate them, make sense of them and share them in due course. On the occasion of his 88th birthday, he published *Ô ma mémoire: la poésie ma nécessité*, a collection of 88 poems from various authors in French (Baudelaire, Rimbaud), English (Shakespeare, E. A. Poe) and German (Hölderlin). In this autobiography through poetry, he explained how each poem had played an important role at a particular moment in his life. For Hessel, poetry was a powerful form of *engagement* as it carried universal values and a legacy from the past that helped him and his audience make sense of the present. This goes against Sartre's distinction in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* between the politically interventionist power of prose and the apolitical nature of poetic language. For

⁴²⁹ Hessel, *Tous comptes faits...ou Presque*, p.102.

⁴³⁰ Truong, *Stéphane Hessel, Ma philosophie et dialogue avec Edgar Morin*, p.11.

⁴³¹ Flügge, *Stéphane Hessel- Portrait d'un rebelle heureux*, p.171.

Sartre, the writer uses prose in a “transitive” way, which means that language is instrumental in this case. It reveals the world to the reader:

L'écrivain “engagé” sait que la parole est action: il sait que dévoiler c'est changer et qu'on ne peut dévoiler qu'en projetant de changer.⁴³²

For Hessel, however, poetry could be a form of action, just like prose, in the sense that it displays a certain sensitivity not normally associated with the negotiator. It is evocative and can establish complicity with the audience. In diplomacy, he would recite poems at the end of speeches to persuade and charm his audience.

TV and radio were other important tools for Hessel's *engagement*. After the end of his diplomatic career, Hessel continued working in a different field: he became a member of the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication in 1982. The state monopoly over radio and television under De Gaulle and Giscard was supposed to cease under Mitterrand's presidency. The state was to distance itself from the broadcasting system. Mitterrand did not free the media from the centralized control of the beginning of the Fifth Republic just for the sake of freedom of information. He was also encouraging certain pro-Gaullist and pro-Giscardian individuals to leave their positions as directors of news, and hence giving him a better chance to exercise control. Yet, Hessel would later praise Mitterrand in his autobiography for creating this authority, whereas he would criticize him for having changed very little in France's policy in Africa. Hessel did not have any experience in the media field, and yet he would be in charge of allocating radio frequencies to private radios:

Stéphane Hessel est sans doute le cas le plus surprenant. Rien ne prédestinait ce diplomate de formation à assumer un jour un poste de responsabilité dans l'audiovisuel. [...] l'instance est investie de pouvoirs sur la plan international: les compétences d'un diplomate ne devraient pas lui être inutiles... Finalement, l'idée séduit François Mitterrand. Il connaît un peu Stéphane Hessel.⁴³³

His surprising appointment is another example of Bourdieu's concept of “cooptation”, according to which members already in place in the administrative or political

⁴³² Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, p.30

⁴³³ Agnès Chauveau, *L'audiovisuel en liberté?: Histoire de la Haute Autorité*, (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1997), pp.167-168.

systems tend to recruit within their professional and intellectual networks.⁴³⁴ The President of the National Assembly, Louis Mermaz, had appointed Hessel. He had previously been recommended to the Minister of Communication Georges Fillioud by Bernard Miyet, a diplomat who was a close associate of Hessel in Geneva. In total, the authority consisted of nine members:

Ses membres sont nommés par décret du Président de la République, trois étant désignés par le Président de la République, trois par le président de l'Assemblée nationale et trois par le président du Sénat.⁴³⁵

As usual in his autobiography, Hessel implied that he had been appointed to this position. He never said that he applied for such and such a job. Consequently, it is hard to understand how Hessel could see this authority as “sortant du carcan gouvernemental conforme à notre tradition jacobine”⁴³⁶ if Mitterrand had approved of his nomination. Still, Hessel seemed to find a motivation in working with community radios, rather than commercial and national radios, because the diplomat in him still thrived on maintaining dialogue with each part of society:

Mon principal souci était que cette nouvelle liberté serve à l'expression de ceux qui n'avaient accès ni à la radio publique ni aux autres médias, ceux que l'on désigne par le terme “minorités”: les habitants des quartiers défavorisés, les immigrés de toutes origines, les fidèles de toutes confessions, les éléments les plus divers du tissu social des villes et des campagnes.[...] Nous eûmes plus de déboires que de succès, mais, à la fin de notre première année de travail, un millier de radios privées (nous refusions de les appeler “libres”, arguant que les radios publiques l'étaient, grâce à nous, tout autant) étaient en mesure d'émettre et de fidéliser un très large public.⁴³⁷

Hessel's reluctance to use the phrase “free radios” suggests that he did not believe that public radios were instrumentalized by the State. The use of the pronoun “nous” also indicates how personally involved he felt under this government. In fact, in 1986, he would even join the Socialist party.

On a personal level, he was familiar with the media sphere. As a diplomat, he had to rely on journalists to relay his message, although they sometimes disappointed him as they paid very little interest to developing countries. He also spoke on the radio and television in these developing countries when resorting to

⁴³⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *La Noblesse d'Etat*, (Paris: Les éditions de minuit, 1989), pp.104.

⁴³⁵ Loi n° 82-652 du 29 juillet 1982 sur la communication audiovisuelle, Article 23.

⁴³⁶ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, p.255.

⁴³⁷ Ibid, pp.258-259.

preventative diplomacy to avoid a conflict or stop an existing conflict from escalating. He rarely used the media for self-promotion, but in 1994 he allowed German directors to make a documentary on him called *Der Diplomat*. As for the Internet, Hessel acknowledged its importance in the creation and development of networks of civic *engagement*, but in 1997 he still seemed wary of its influence on freethinking:

Je voyais ces progrès comme un effet de l'économie de marché sans règles. Je redoutais pour l'expression de la pensée personnelle la banalisation par l'ordinateur, l'asservissement de l'imaginaire individuel par la commercialisation des messages.⁴³⁸

Hessel was obviously more present in the media from 2010 until his death because of the success of his pamphlet *Indignez-vous!* However, what is unusual in the launching of his book is that it first met success through a regional network of bookshops and word-of-mouth before being advertized on national television:

[...] c'est vraiment le succès d'un éditeur indépendant, lié à un diffuseur indépendant, et lié à un réseau de libraires indépendants. C'est le succès d'un livre qui a commencé en s'appuyant sur cette base, à Montpellier, et qui est ensuite allé vers Toulouse, le grand réseau des réfugiés républicains espagnols, qui est monté par Bordeaux, et jusqu'à la Bretagne. Il a un peu encerclé la France, et a seulement, après, fait ricochet sur Paris.

[...] il y a quand même eu une émission de télévision la veille du démarrage du livre. Stéphane Hessel a été invité à l'émission de Taddei (*Ce soir (ou jamais !)*, sur Arte, le 19 octobre 2010). [...] Taddei nous a téléphoné en disant « Je veux faire une émission sur la révolte de la jeunesse. Est-ce que Stéphane Hessel accepterait d'être là ? » Il a dit oui, et il a été brillant. Cette émission a compté, mais n'a pas été le facteur déclencheur du succès.⁴³⁹

Sylvie Crossman, Hessel's publisher, insisted here on the fact that this publishing success was the result of a resistance from the south and other French provinces to Parisian centralism. Hessel's *engagement* was hailed as a victory over the dominance of the intelligentsia and the media. The ex-Résistant was presented as the spokesman of a new resistance. The last section of this chapter will look to explain Hessel's propulsion to fame and discuss his status as "intellectuel malgré lui".

⁴³⁸ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, pp.300-301.

⁴³⁹ Sylvie Crossman, Indigène Editions, Hessel's publisher, interviewed by Marine Orain, 18 September 2014.

Urging youth to action through the written word became the highlight of his career. So far, this chapter has portrayed Hessel as a man of action with a wealth of diplomatic skills, working and networking around the world. And yet, the gifted orator is paradoxically the author of a bestselling book, *Indignez-vous!* (2010). He is not exclusively a writer, a philosopher, a poet, or a politician. Therefore, it is hard to categorize him and this is undoubtedly disturbing to his detractors. To add to the controversy, his book is only 30-pages long (in fact, only 14-page long for the pamphlet itself). The wide range and order of the topics covered make its structure questionable. For a book denouncing social injustice, human rights abuse, the violation of international law and the destruction of the environment, very few solutions can be found in these pages. The author invites us to defend the legacy of the Conseil National de la Résistance: the pension system, social security, the nationalization of electricity, gas and banks, and the freedom of press. However, with the rise of the retirement age, the huge social security deficit, the wave of privatization from the mid-80s onwards, one can wonder what are the social benefits still standing.

Still, the 4.5 million copies sold around the world arguably outweigh these weaknesses. To explain this publishing success, the basic premise would be to say that Hessel chose the right form at the right time and that his life experience was inspirational to the readers. Nicolas Sarkozy had just introduced reforms to the pension system, which were opposed by demonstrators. Hessel released his 3-euro pamphlet between this socially tense month of September and Christmas 2010. As for the form, the choice was actually made by his publishers. Sylvie Crossman and Jean-Pierre Barou had started publishing a collection, « Ceux qui marchent contre le vent », of three 30-page books by different authors who had written on the topic of resistance to the establishment and standardization. The books were selling well according to this format. After Sylvie Crossman went to listen to Stéphane Hessel's speech during the presentation of a movie on the resistant Walter Bassan, she met him several times to discuss the idea of a book. Therefore, *Indignez-vous!* is more of a interview without questions or a conversation. The publishers even chose the title :

Je me suis dit qu'une injonction allait créer un événement. Cela faisait longtemps qu'on travaillait, Jean-Pierre et moi, dans cette optique-là. On

espérait une sorte de réveil des consciences, de sursaut des consciences dans un monde qui était affligeant, et on s'est dit « Ce personnage va porter ce cri ». ⁴⁴⁰

His book was a rallying cry indeed across Europe, especially in Spain where it inspired *Los Indignados*, the anti-austerity movement that formed the political party *Podemos*. However, in France, there were more readers than *indignés*. There were demonstrations in the main French cities and a strong protest on social networks but nothing compared to the camps of Los Indignados and Occupy Wall Street. This could be explained by the economic situation in France which was relatively better compared to Spain. In the last quarter of 2010, France's total unemployment rate was 9.2% (INSEE.fr) whereas Spain's total unemployment rate was 20% (ECB.europa.eu). French demonstrators also claimed that their movement was weakened under police pressure and repressive measures. According to the CNRS researcher Lilian Mathieu, the French movement was fighting on several fronts, so there was no specific collective demand.⁴⁴¹ One could argue though that this was exactly what Hessel had asked for in his pamphlet : find your own reason for indignation. Most of them protested against the abuse of financial capitalism, which was quite a vague and immaterial target. So in a way, they did not rebel against power, they asked for more power to be implemented through tougher regulations. Finally, for the sociologist Michel Wieviorka, Spain was already disillusioned by Zapatero's left whereas France was still hopeful that the next presidential election could give a chance to the left and bring the social changes expected.⁴⁴² Also, the French were very wary of any political appropriation of the movement, which never materialized in a party like *Podemos*. In the end, one concrete achievement for Hessel was perhaps to see François Hollande win the presidential election in 2012. Hessel had successively granted his support to Martine Aubry and François Hollande during the campaign. There was no revolution, but again Hessel never wished for one. He was a social democrat who advocated non-violence and denied the benefits of revolution :

⁴⁴⁰ Sylvie Crossman, Indigène Editions, Hessel's publisher, interviewed by Marine Orain, 18 September 2014.

⁴⁴¹ Lilian Mathieu, 'Pourquoi les Indignés français ne décollent-ils pas ?', *Libération*, 12 October 2011.

⁴⁴² Michel Wieviorka, 'L'indignation virtuelle: une exception française?', *Libération*, 25 August 2011.

Car la révolution qui veut faire table rase du passé se fourvoie complètement: non seulement on ne fait jamais vraiment table rase, comme les continuités le démontrent dans toutes les révolutions, mais encore il faut conserver les trésors du passé. [...] La modernité ne peut pas être la négation du passé à moins de se condamner au déracinement.⁴⁴³

On top of this social, economic and political context, Hessel's success also had to do with his background and authenticity. His experience as ex-Résistant, survivor of the concentration camps and international diplomat gave him a certain legitimacy to address the youth. He was not compromised by any political responsibility, nor did he aim to make any profit from the book. Hessel never accepted the royalties, but instead had a moral agreement with his publishers who promised to make regular donations to his clubs and associations.⁴⁴⁴ He was also an internationalist, in the sense that he did not address only French young people but youth in general. In his next publications, he continued calling for global civism, the awareness of an international citizenship and responsibility :

Je crois que la différence entre ma génération et la vôtre, c'est que mon civisme était encore essentiellement national – je me préoccupais du bon fonctionnement de la France et de sa survie ; aujourd'hui, il est probable qu'on se rapproche d'un civisme global, ne serait-ce que parce qu'on se rend compte qu'aucun Etat individuel n'est en mesure de faire face à ces défis dont nous parlons.⁴⁴⁵

Hessel was a Europhile before being a Francophile. He encouraged the ideas of global civism and a federal Europe in the middle of the European sovereign debt crisis. In France, the 2010 regional elections showed a record abstention. The electorate was disillusioned. Hessel appeared as an intellectual leader giving hope to the European youth:

Peut-être doit-on voir dans l'admiration dont il est l'objet un complexe d'Œdipe inversé. L'autorité morale, politique, l'autorité tout court devient une denrée rare; mais pour autant le besoin d'autorité est évident, en écho à celle des anciens, au souvenir de ce qu'étaient nos pères et nos grands-pères. [...]

⁴⁴³ Hessel, *Tous comptes faits...ou Presque*, pp.56-57.

⁴⁴⁴ Sylvie Crossman, Indigène Editions, Hessel's publisher, interviewed by Marine Orain, 18 September 2014.

⁴⁴⁵ Hessel, *Engagez-vous!*, p.22.

Dans le domaine politique, il n'y a plus de grands hommes meneurs des nations [...]; on ne croit plus en la vertu de l'autorité, tout en éprouvant le besoin de l'avoir et d'y croire.⁴⁴⁶

The anti-austerity movement was pictured as a “sursaut démocratique”, a reaffirmation of the rights and duties of citizens and universal values. For Edgar Morin, *Indignez-vous!* was a demand for dignity carried by a universalist humanist.⁴⁴⁷

However, Hessel's pamphlet did not convince all of the intelligentsia and the right. The linguist Jean Szlamowicz wrote a book, *Détrompez-vous!*, to warn of the strong stand against the successive Israeli-governments compared to the general political abstraction in *Indignez-vous!* Gilles-William Goldnadel denounced Hessel's selectivity of *engagement* in *Le vieil homme m'indigne ! : Les postures et impostures de Stéphane Hessel*. The former director of the ENS, Monique Canto-Sperber, cancelled Hessel's conference in January 2011 because it was organized by Paix Justice Palestine.org and did not guarantee a plurality of views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.⁴⁴⁸ Hessel was in favour of a two-state solution but he publicly condemned the successive Israeli administrations and their actions against Palestine. Hessel usually advocated non-violence but he made a lot of enemies when saying in his pamphlet that he understood the use of violence by Palestinians and Hamas:

Je pense bien évidemment que le terrorisme est inacceptable, mais il faut reconnaître que lorsque l'on est occupé avec des moyens militaires infiniment supérieurs aux vôtres, la réaction populaire ne peut pas être *que* non-violence.⁴⁴⁹

Hessel was part of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine created in 2009 to put pressure on public opinion and the UN to solve the Israel-Palestine conflict. He believed that only international law could put an end to the conflict, as it was the only limit to our desires:

D'une certaine façon, Israël se comporte à l'égard des Palestiniens comme tant d'autres Etats se sont comportés dans l'histoire – comme la France en

⁴⁴⁶ Goldman, in Gilles Vanderpooten, *Stéphane Hessel, irrésistible optimiste*, p.95.

⁴⁴⁷ Morin, in Gilles Vanderpooten, *Stéphane Hessel, irrésistible optimiste*, p.183.

⁴⁴⁸ Monique Canto-Sperber, 'Pourquoi j'ai annulé un meeting propalestinien', *Le Monde*, 27 January 2011.

⁴⁴⁹ Hessel, *Indignez-vous!*, p.18.

Algérie, par exemple. Pourquoi le droit international n'était-il pas alors la base de nos réactions? [...] ⁴⁵⁰

Hessel felt particularly involved in this conflict because he worked at the UN in November 1947 in New York when the Partition Resolution was adopted.

In three of his next books – *Engagez-vous* (2011), *Le chemin de l'espérance* (2011), *Tous comptes faits... ou presque* (2012) – Hessel would develop his thought on a variety of topics, such as globalization, the UN reform and the democratization of education, in order to answer his critics, offering concrete solutions and debating with other intellectuals. He always defended “l'art de la brièveté” which he liked in poetry but also applied in his pamphlet:

[...] je ne suis pas un homme politique au sens propre du terme. Seulement, j'ai bien conscience que le besoin de messages clairs et positifs est fort. Simplicité n'est pas simplisme. ⁴⁵¹

In any case, his books were mainly transcripts of conversations with other intellectuals, for example Edgar Morin, the Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi, so they were meant to be fairly short. According to Manfred Flügge, this form reflected his personality in a way:

Il correspond tout à fait à la méthode Hessel, qui consiste à assimiler tout ce qui vient d'ailleurs et des autres, les arguments, les références et les concepts apportés par des amis, des critiques, et que l'auteur sait élégamment intégrer dans son discours. Ce procédé convient au style du personnage, qui a l'art de développer ses idées au fil d'un discours oral selon un trait qui ressemble à sa façon de réciter des poèmes [...] ⁴⁵²

Although Hessel was not a writer, he managed to make of the written word, or the transcription of dialogue, the trigger of social *engagement*.

Looking back at his career, Stéphane Hessel seemed surprised by his trajectory, almost as if it had been a matter of chance, appointment after appointment, and invitation after invitation. Had he really been the “intellectuel malgré lui”? The man who exhorted young people to take control of their lives and accomplish meaningful actions with the motto “Créer, c'est résister. Résister, c'est

⁴⁵⁰ Hessel, *Tous comptes faits...ou Presque*, p.142.

⁴⁵¹ Hessel, *Tous comptes faits...ou Presque*, p.133.

⁴⁵² Flügge, *Stéphane Hessel- Portrait d'un rebelle heureux*, p.260.

créer”⁴⁵³ cannot possibly have let his career follow its course without intervening. Hessel admitted that his career had been unusual for a diplomat:

Ma carrière diplomatique a été presque aussi atypique que ma déportation. Je n’ai occupé aucun des postes classiques où se forment les futurs ambassadeurs. [...] Je suis resté à Paris 24 ans sur les 40 qui vont de mon entrée au ministère à ma retraite.⁴⁵⁴

His career gave him an internationalist outlook hitherto unseen in a French intellectual. His main challenge was to “decolonize” the Ministry of Cooperation, but he met a lot of resistance to his universal ideals and sometimes had to compromise to serve France’s “best” interests. What is striking then is his relentless militancy despite the defeats or indifference he faced. Hessel called his positivity “mon strabisme moral”⁴⁵⁵, in the sense that he decided to ignore desolation and resignation. He was aware of his failures, but for him *engagement* was to progress from one form of mediation to another. Even when mediation failed, the important thing was to keep the negotiation rolling with the next mediation.

Hessel stuck to Sartre’s concept of individual responsibility, from his participation in the Resistance to his *engagement* in soft-power groups.⁴⁵⁶ In fact, he even refused to subscribe to any ideology and kept relatively distant from partisan politics too. According to his publisher, Jean-Pierre Barou, this is mainly what distinguishes the two intellectuals:

Si je n’ai plus pour m’aider à m’engager de grands schémas idéologiques tels qu’ils existaient au temps de Sartre, alors ma responsabilité individuelle n’en devient que plus importante. [...] On est passé d’un engagement comme on l’imagine à l’époque des grandes manifestations, des grands clivages, des guerres d’indépendances, des guerres anticoloniales – qui se sont avérées d’ailleurs, sur le plan du résultat, assez piteuses – à un engagement qui revient aujourd’hui vers votre responsabilité individuelle. [...] On a glissé. Ce qui est curieux, c’est que ceux qui glissent se revendiquent quand même de Sartre, parce que c’est quand même ça l’existentialisme, c’est ça la notion de liberté. Il y a une affirmation vers une position, non pas plus individualiste, mais qui engage votre responsabilité d’être humain. Je pense

⁴⁵³ Hessel, *Indignez-vous!*, p.22.

⁴⁵⁴ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, p.186.

⁴⁵⁵ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, p.300

⁴⁵⁶ The term “soft power” has been developed by the Harvard Professor Joseph Nye to describe the persuasive and noncoercive way to engage in international relations, using culture, political values, public image and communication skills.

que c'est un des grands moments dans lequel nous nous trouvons aujourd'hui.⁴⁵⁷

Hessel also challenged Sartre's vision of the intellectual par excellence as the literary writer depicted in *Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels*. Even though Hessel only became known to the masses from the moment he published *Indignez-Vous!*, he could not possibly be described as a "literary writer". Hessel's attachment to individual responsibility and *engagement* was not entirely compatible with academia either. He worked in the Ministry of Education and helped build the education systems of newly decolonized countries, but never held the position of academic himself. Nevertheless, he did not conceive of diplomacy as a more noble occupation than academia. At the end of his career, he was still haunted by his *universalité singulière* which is, as described by Sartre, the tension within the intellectuals between their endorsement of universal values and their particularism of class. He wondered whether he could have been an academic:

Aurais-je pu faire comme eux? [...] mes activités de diplomate me semblaient bien superficielles, leur effet sur le réel bien éphémère. [...] Il m'apparaissait que les universitaires sont, au moins autant que les diplomates, enfermés dans une sorte de bulle faite de reconnaissance mutuelle de valeurs hautement symboliques que le devenir du monde extérieur n'atteint pas. [...] N'étais-je pas toujours resté à la surface, et ce que j'appelais le monde était-il autre chose que le reflet météorologique changeant de vérités plus profondes ?⁴⁵⁸

In his autobiography, Hessel seemed to concede this rhetorical question on his lack of academic work to his detractors. Still, this was not a very convincing introspection as he gladly accepted the position of Ambassador to the UN in Geneva soon after and kept taking on other non-academic responsibilities until his death. Ultimately, Hessel's popular success resided in his will to pass on his thirst for *engagement*, through the written word by putting in charge the youth. His most successful mediation will have been connecting his legacy of the 20th century with the 21st century stakes and challenges.

⁴⁵⁷ Jean-Pierre Barou, Indigène Editions, Hessel's publisher, interviewed by Marine Orain, 18 September 2014.

⁴⁵⁸ Hessel, *Danse avec le siècle*, pp.220-221.

Conclusion

This research on the post-Sartrean intellectual landscape has brought me to the conclusion that it is not so much the transformation of the intellectual that matters, but the transformation of the notion of *engagement*, which can now be shared by the masses without the necessity of the intellectual's intervention. Even if today's intellectuals can now rely on the media and social media to exist in the public realm, they can only have a legitimate purpose and a certain recognition in society if, like Sartre and Hessel before them, they aim to democratize *engagement* and demonstrate their authenticity. First, Sartre awakened citizens' consciences by resorting to different genres and media to reach the masses and by inciting individuals to act. If his *engagement* was once anchored in Marxism, why is he still worth reading after the fall of ideologies? Jean-Pierre Barou, who worked with Sartre for *La Cause du Peuple* and published Hessel's pamphlet, answered this question:

On est passé d'un engagement comme on l'imagine à l'époque des grandes manifestations, des grands clivages, des guerres d'indépendances, des guerres anticoloniales – qui se sont avérées d'ailleurs, sur le plan du résultat, assez piteuses – à un engagement qui revient aujourd'hui vers votre responsabilité individuelle. C'est à vous de vous déterminer, avec des critères qui sont les vôtres, en fonction de votre conscience, de votre raison, d'analyses qui vous sont propres, avant d'aller rejoindre tel ou tel camp. [...] On a glissé. Ce qui est curieux, c'est que ceux qui glissent se revendiquent quand même de Sartre, parce que c'est quand même ça l'existentialisme, c'est ça la notion de liberté. Il y a une affirmation vers une position, non pas plus individualiste, mais qui engage votre responsabilité d'être humain. Je pense que c'est un des grands moments dans lequel nous nous trouvons aujourd'hui.

Therefore, although the definition of *engagement* has lost its ideological partisanship, Sartre remains a reference for the new generation of intellectuals and readers who still feel empowered by his philosophical theory. Given that Hessel claimed that Sartre's notion of individual responsibility was at the heart of his own *engagement*, he benefited from his aura by association. Consequently, when Hessel published *Indignez-vous !* at the age of 93, he was still appealing to *Los Indignados* and the young generation in general. Furthermore, Hessel's authenticity became synonymous with legitimacy : his World War Two experiences and his diplomatic career finally came to light and inspired young people. In my interview with her,

Sylvie Crossman, Hessel's other publisher and Jean-Pierre Barou's partner, explained his belated recognition as follows :

Sa légitimité à la fois de grand personnage - qui avait engagé sa vie dans la Résistance, dans la lutte pour les droits de l'homme, dans la lutte pour la justice un peu partout dans le monde, dans la lutte pour les sans-papiers - a beaucoup contribué au succès. Il a porté le livre par ça. C'était un homme d'une probité morale, éthique, irréprochable, et sa générosité s'exprimait partout.

Beyond the fact that it was based on an inspirational life story and was published in a 30-page format, his pamphlet was popular because it directly addressed young people in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis. Intellectuals must not see themselves as righters of wrongs, but can instead share their life experience and belief in universal values with the younger generation. Word of mouth and independent bookshops allowed his pamphlet to resist the tide of media commercialism. The fact that Hessel did not claim any royalties on the sales of his book reinforces the authenticity of his message. Another legacy from Sartre and Hessel to the new generation of intellectuals is the importance of balance between media exposure and the amount of time devoted to reflection and writing. For example, after distancing himself from the Communist Party, Sartre granted very few interviews between 1956 and 1958. Both Lévy and Morin have also claimed in their interviews that they are never happier than when they spend time away from media exposure, as if their interventions in the media were a necessary evil, a sacrifice for the common good. When I interviewed Jean-Pierre Barou, he condemned intellectuals who published excessively. Although I agree with him that it is sometimes necessary for intellectuals to withdraw from the public realm in order to keep a critical distance from the media frenzy, I also think that new media are making it more tempting for intellectuals to intervene, even unsolicited. Would Camus have maintained a low profile had he lived in the Twitter era? I have argued that we cannot blame intellectuals for using the communicative tools of their time, but as Hessel demonstrates, the public is still receptive to a literature that fosters social change.

My research also highlights fundamental evolutions undergone by intellectuals since the Liberation. The French intelligentsia has lost the collective nature that was once highlighted by Clemenceau during the Dreyfus Affair. During the Second World War, the underground character of the Resistance meant that intellectuals often acted in isolation. The Algerian War witnessed the war of

manifestos, but it was followed by the underground activism of intellectuals like Francis Jeanson. Therefore, individual initiatives, reinforced by Sartre's concept of individual responsibility have proved to have universal benefits. Furthermore, the presence of certain intellectuals and publishing houses outside of Paris is also a positive sign of the decentralization of *engagement*. For example, the philosopher Michel Onfray started his own Université Populaire in 2002 in Caen and has launched his own Web TV in September 2016 with the objective of interacting with the public and other intellectuals on a dedicated and independent platform. Hessel's publisher, Indigène Editions, is also proud of being based in Montpellier to distinguish itself from the big names of the Parisian publishing world. Further, the intellectual is not exclusively a writer or a philosopher anymore. As Stéphane Hessel's career in diplomacy and wartime experience show, the public values authenticity, selflessness and risk-taking in an intellectual. Since the end of the intellectual's monopoly of knowledge, the masses are no longer identifying with ideologies and are rather in search of inspirational life experiences. Intellectuals have also diversified their causes: while the defence of universal values remains their primary motivation, their *engagement* is now global, as opposed to Zola's *sursaut républicain*. Hessel was aware of this new international dimension for young intellectuals:

Je crois que la différence entre ma génération et la vôtre, c'est que mon civisme était encore essentiellement national – je me préoccupais du bon fonctionnement de la France et de sa survie; aujourd'hui, il est probable qu'on se rapproche d'un civisme global, ne serait-ce que parce qu'on se rend compte qu'aucun Etat individuel n'est en mesure de faire face à ces défis dont nous parlons. Et qu'il a beau être le mieux gouverné possible, cela ne suffit pas; il faut qu'il fasse partie d'un ensemble.⁴⁵⁹

The hope of a Revolution disappeared with the intellectual's disillusionment with Marxism. Instead, certain intellectuals have engaged in mediation, as a compromise form of action, unlike Sartre and the Maoists' radical conception of *engagement*. In addition to the universal values defended by the classic intellectual, the new intellectual is increasingly concerned with the fields of ecology and globalization. Their marginality in politics means that they have had to find other platforms of expression, such as journalism and social networks. Journalists who criticize

⁴⁵⁹ Stéphane Hessel, *Engagez-vous!, Entretiens avec Gilles Vanderpooten*, (Paris: Editions de l'aube, 2011), p.22.

intellectuals have dominated intellectual debate. For example, most books on Lévy have been written by journalists, as most intellectuals, like Bourdieu, do not wish to be associated with him. While new mass media, such as Twitter, considerably increase the interaction between intellectuals and public opinion, they have not yet revived debate among intellectuals themselves.

Despite all these changes, new intellectuals have not managed to overcome their universal singularity, a concept developed by Sartre to describe a notion capturing both the universality of the individual in relation to human history and the individual's uniqueness. Intellectuals still very much reflect the tension between the endorsement of universal values and their particularism of class. They are fundamentally flawed since they are still defined as guardians of universals but they have to do so with constraints, which for the most part they have imposed on themselves. In my view, their credentials are far from being universal. To secure their peers' acknowledgement, intellectuals are almost required to have completed their "apprenticeship": they are expected to have passed the *agrégation de philosophie* at the ENS, have been engaged in the Resistance, written philosophical essays, gone through a phase of *compagnonnage de route*, understood the students and workers' demands during May 68 and as a result, launched into a phase of self-questioning.

This also implies a certain hierarchy of forms of intervention among the intelligentsia, or rather the interdependence of these forms: the intellectual's use of certain modes of action is made legitimate by previous modes of action. This chronology is both established by intellectuals and by the public. I have explained how the act of writing gained more respectability from the moment Sartre launched his campaign for the recognition of prose as *engagement* in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* in 1948. In parallel with the decline of philosophy, petitions and manifestos – the former had a more defined recipient than the latter – were also an important tool for intellectuals who signed them especially up until the Algerian War. The first form of *engagement*, literature, was a pre-requisite to resort to this second form of *engagement*. Despite their elitist aspect, petitions and manifestos constituted a testament to the intellectuals' participation in the public debate and left a quantifiable written trace of their involvement in history. With the fall of ideologies, they were succeeded by more individualistic modes of action. Through activism, some intellectuals tried to fill the gap between their condition of bourgeois intellectual

and the masses. Underground resistant or anticolonialist activism does not have the same reach as a categorical public stand, such as a signature on a petition. And yet, underground action and public stands complement each other in the sense that the former, when proven and revealed to the public eye, legitimizes the latter. I have shown this relation of cause and effect with the case study of Bernard-Henri Lévy, born in 1948, who lacked underground action in order to break from his bourgeois image while Stéphane Hessel, born in 1917, benefited from his status as resistance hero.

Activism is nonetheless exposed to criticism. It seems that underground activism and its risk-taking is more valued by the masses than “daylight” activism. This can be illustrated by the nickname “QHS”, as in “Quatre Heures à Sarajevo”⁴⁶⁰ given to Lévy by war reporters in Bosnia to mock the fact that his field trips were rather brief. Underground activism shows selflessness and authenticity, in the sense that it is not used – at least at first – for self-promotion. It also shows agency, since the intellectual is not commissioned by the state to intervene. In my view, Francis Jeanson re-defined the intellectual’s role when he led a network of militants who carried money and papers for the FLN during the Algerian War. In that case, the intellectual was not *au-dessus de la mêlée*, he created the *mêlée*. He did not simply denounce an injustice; he embodied action itself. He was substituting himself for the Socialist government and making decisions in its place. His underground action was the subject of his 1960 pamphlet *Notre guerre*. This goes to show that literature and activism are complementary in the sense that they explain and justify each other.

Another form of intervention by new intellectuals has been working for or with the State, but I have shown through my case studies that this was usually at their expense. Sartre and Hessel have suffered from state censorship : Sartre’s television programme was cancelled under state monopoly, while Hessel’s reports on developing countries were systematically ignored by the state. In fact, I have argued that Hessel only becomes a whistle blower from the moment he departs from his diplomatic responsibilities. At the end of his life, he called for a reform of development aid :

De même devons-nous indiquer que la formule standardisée du développement ignore les solidarités, les savoirs et savoir-faire des sociétés traditionnelles, et

⁴⁶⁰ Nicolas Beau & Olivier Toscer, *Une imposture française*, (Paris: Les arènes, 2006), p.181.

qu'il faut repenser et diversifier le développement de façon à ce qu'il préserve les solidarités propres aux enveloppements communautaires.⁴⁶¹

Therefore, it appears that the only benefit intellectuals can derive from working for or with the State without compromising themselves is that they can alert public opinion to the insufficiency or nonexistence of the state's intervention on specific matters.

Finally, new intellectuals have been resorting to mass media, not without criticism and suspicion from the masses. Although they got closer to the masses through newspapers, radio and television programmes and cinema, their media exposure has been regarded as a sell-out. Since some intellectuals are in cahoots with certain publishing houses and newspapers within a Parisian bubble, they do not need the recognition of their peers, nor that of the masses, to exist in the public realm. Through my case study of Lévy, I have demonstrated that the concentration of places implies the concentration of men, which implies the concentration of powers. As opposed to the Foucauldian "specific intellectual"⁴⁶² – intellectual who is an expert in a specific field, who is able to combine theory and practice and does not make universal claims – these intellectuals express themselves on a variety of topics. Why are there not more specialists and researchers in the media then? Probably because they are too scrupulous to reduce their research to a short intervention span, they may not feel comfortable with public speech or not be charismatic enough to be consulted. Or, as explained earlier, they may not wish to be associated with "media" intellectuals. This in turn does nothing but reinforce the intellectual's control over mass media. As explained by Régis Debray, new intellectuals have bypassed the criteria for the recognition of classic intellectuals:

En reculant les bornes de l'écoute, les mass media ont [...] multiplié les sources de légitimité intellectuelle, en englobant l'étroite sphère de l'intelligentsia professionnelle, source classique de légitimité, dans des cercles concentriques plus larges, moins exigeants et donc plus faciles à gagner.⁴⁶³

However, I have explained in my thesis that the Internet, and more specifically social networks – allow intellectuals to interact with the masses without this "lack of

⁴⁶¹ Stéphane Hessel, Edgar Morin, *Le Chemin de l'espérance*, (Paris: Fayard, 2011), p.13.

⁴⁶² Michel Foucault, "La fonction politique de l'intellectuel", *Dits et écrits III*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p.109.

⁴⁶³ Régis Debray, *Le Pouvoir intellectuel en France*, (Paris: Editions Ramsay, 1979), p.96.

reciprocity” between the author and the writer that Sartre deplored in 1960 in *Critique de la raison dialectique*.⁴⁶⁴ By resorting to the same social networks as the masses, intellectuals contribute to the democratization of *engagement*.

In the absence of experts in intellectual debates, the new intellectual occasionally interacts with fellow intellectuals. This was the case for Lévy and Michel Houellebecq in *Ennemis publics*, although their “debate” in the form of an exchange of “letters” was very contrived and quite dull, compared to the polemical debate on *épuration* between Mauriac and Camus during the Liberation. Hessel and Edgar Morin also published a book together, *Le Chemin de l’espérance*, but it was addressed to their fellow citizens and they both agreed to call for a return to the humanist values of the Enlightenment, therefore it was more of a manifesto, than a debate. Hessel also engaged with highly respected public figures like the Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi through several livres de conversations, but again they led to a consensus, rather than a debate, and their mutual prestige only exacerbates the elitist aspect of intellectuals.

If intellectual debate is on the wane, perhaps other types of debate can generate change. Like Sartre at the end of his life, Hessel engaged in conversations with young people. For example, after his international success with *Indignez-vous!*, Hessel published *Engagez-vous!*, a book of interviews with Gilles Vanderpooten, a young writer and head of the NGO Reporters d’espoirs. The 68-year age difference between the two men truly produced an intergenerational conversation. This was part of Vanderpooten’s series of publications titled “Conversation pour l’avenir” in which he interviewed a wide range of personalities, among whom were a movie director, a comedian, a great traveller, a designer and a philosopher. I have argued that with the fall of ideologies and the consolidation of international and European laws, individuals are more likely to be inspired by role models who work and have an impact on society than by *lettrés* who are out of touch with reality.

Moreover, the *engagement* of the masses is already taking place without the intervention of intellectuals. The time when petitions were reserved for the elite has long gone: websites such as Change.org allow anybody to start, sign and share a petition, interact with decision makers and find solutions. At 10,000 signatures, the

⁴⁶⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique de la Raison dialectique*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p.476.

UK government must provide a response and at 100,000 the petition is considered for a debate in Parliament. More importantly, the anonymity of this type of *engagement* goes against the public aspect of the intellectual. *Engagement* is not exclusively linked to the intellectual. In Hessel's case, the start of his *engagement* is in fact largely attributable to his publishers who convinced him to turn his speech into a pamphlet and used their network of independent bookshops to distribute it.

This raises the question of agency: how intentional is *engagement*? A few days after receiving his Nobel Prize, Albert Camus declared:

Aujourd'hui, tout est changé, le silence même prend un sens redoutable. À partir du moment où l'abstention elle-même est considérée comme un choix, puni ou loué comme tel, l'artiste, qu'il le veuille ou non, est embarqué. Embarqué me paraît ici plus juste qu'engagé. Il ne s'agit pas en effet pour l'artiste d'un engagement volontaire, mais plutôt d'un service militaire obligatoire. Tout artiste aujourd'hui est embarqué dans la galère de son temps. Il doit s'y résigner, même s'il juge que cette galère sent le hareng, que les gardes-chiourme y sont vraiment trop nombreux et que, de surcroît, le cap est mal pris. Nous sommes en pleine mer. L'artiste, comme les autres, doit ramer à son tour, sans mourir, s'il le peut, c'est-à-dire en continuant de vivre et de créer.⁴⁶⁵

Camus had already announced his decision not to get involved in the fight for the independence of Algeria. Therefore, even his silences would be interpreted by the media and public opinion as an *engagement* of some sort. Similarly, Edgar Morin rejects the Sartrean connotation of the term *engagement*:

Vous savez, moi même, je n'aime pas beaucoup ce mot d'"engagement", que Sartre a popularisé et qui a une connotation militaire, voire disciplinaire. Il est très utilisé. Mais moi, je considère qu'il [Hessel] est présent dans son siècle. A un moment donné, pour certains comme pour moi, ce qu'on pense, ce qu'on vit et ce qu'on fait sont toujours étroitement liés. Comme on est présents dans la vie du monde, aussi bien les problèmes politiques de la France, de l'Europe, du monde, on est amené à intervenir selon l'exigence de sa conscience. [...] Quand on pense défendre soit une vérité bafouée, soit combattre une injustice, alors on est qualifié d'engagé.

Therefore, it is not entirely up to writers to decide whether or not they are *engagés*, society decides for them. For example, Lévy is a self-declared intellectual, but his legitimacy to claim this title is strongly questioned by critics.

I conclude from this research that the intellectual is not so much *engagé* as the individual who triggers *engagement* in others. With the development of mass

⁴⁶⁵ Albert Camus, Conference 'L'artiste et son temps', 14 December 1957, Uppsala University.

media and instantaneousness, the intellectual does not alert public opinion on global issues anymore, but rather offers solutions and interacts with other socio-professional categories and generations. If intellectuals ever disappear, they will have achieved their objective: the democratization of *engagement* and the empowerment of the masses.

This research contributes to the field of French intellectual history by providing an up-to-date analysis of intellectuals, their forms of intervention and the notion of *engagement*. It gathers original materials in the form of interviews with contemporary intellectuals and publishers. Further research could explore the younger generation of intellectuals who are not necessarily *lettrés*. This could include deepening the quantitative and qualitative analysis of intellectuals' Twitter contributions that I started during my research: the causes they defend, the key words they use, their interactions with the public and among themselves. Following the outcome of my thesis, I am also very much interested in exploring the development of digital citizen *engagement* and collaborative economy and therefore, I have been reading the work of the Belgian writer and peer-to-peer theorist Michel Bauwens and the French writer and environmentalist Pierre Rabhi. The appeal and impact of online platforms for social and environmental change is definitely worth studying, given that the 18-24 year old category of voters in France has a higher percentage of abstention than the other age categories.⁴⁶⁶ Even though this indicates a rejection of the current political establishment, this does not mean that youth is depoliticized, as shows the success of *Indignez-vous!*

⁴⁶⁶ 'Les jeunes et le vote', *Institut national de la jeunesse et de l'éducation populaire*, January 2015 <http://www.injep.fr/sites/default/files/documents/fr28_vote.pdf> [accessed 1 October 2016]

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Appendices

Appendice A

I interviewed Sylvie Crossman and Jean-Pierre Barou from Indigène Editions on 18th September 2014, on Skype. They published Hessel's pamphlet, *Indignez-vous!* and are based in Montpellier.

M.O : Combien d'exemplaires d'*Indignez-vous* avez-vous publiés jusqu'à maintenant ?

S.C. : Alors, écoutez, en France, on peut dire que cela se stabilise autour de 2,5 millions d'exemplaires, et au total, dans le monde, 4 millions, en incluant la France. Le livre continue d'être demandé.

M.O. : Chiffres impressionnants ! Et savez-vous en combien de langues a-t-il été traduit ?

S.C. : Je dirais plus de 40 langues. Ce qui est très frappant, c'est que l'Espagne a été le pays qui a le plus fait écho au livre. C'est le pays étranger où il s'est le plus vendu. En Espagne, il a été traduit en castillan, en catalan, en basque, en galicien, en valenciennois et en langue des Asturies. Il a aussi été traduit en espéranto !

M.O. : Et comment a progressé sa diffusion ? J'ai lu que son succès était, au départ, régional.

S.C. : Oui. Notre siège est à Montpellier. Ce qui est très intéressant et, à notre avis, très symptomatique d'une époque, c'est que la résistance, l'engagement n'est plus autant le fait du monde parisien, notamment de l'intelligentsia parisienne qui est très sclérosée sur des pensées toutes faites, schématiques, déjà figées. En fait, le succès d'*Indignez-vous !* a commencé dans le sud, tout le sud : Montpellier, parce qu'on en est issu, donc en tant qu'éditeurs indépendants, on avait un très bon réseau de libraires qu'on a forcément activé, et on avait notre diffuseur, Harmonia Mundi, qui est aussi un diffuseur indépendant. Le diffuseur est fondamental dans une maison d'éditions. Bernard Coutaz, qui est depuis décédé, et qui n'a pas vu le succès d'*Indignez-vous !* était un homme lui-même très engagé : il avait été porteur de valises pendant la Guerre d'Algérie. Donc, c'est vraiment le succès d'un éditeur indépendant, lié à un diffuseur indépendant, et lié à un réseau de libraires indépendants. C'est le succès d'un livre qui a commencé en s'appuyant sur cette base, à Montpellier, et qui est ensuite allé vers Toulouse, le grand réseau des réfugiés républicains espagnols, qui est monté par Bordeaux, et jusqu'à la Bretagne. Il a un peu encerclé la France, et a seulement, après, fait ricochet sur Paris. D'ailleurs, les critiques du message de Hessel, cette espèce de jalousie, de perte de pouvoir suite à ce texte, de la part de certains intellectuels parisiens, se sont manifestées assez fortement à Paris. Et essentiellement à Paris. C'est un phénomène de résistance du sud, régional, mais au sens où le sud, à nos yeux, est vraiment aujourd'hui un siège de résistance au centralisme parisien et à une sorte de cour parisienne.

M.O. : Il est intéressant de voir que l'Internet et la télévision n'ont pas contribué, au départ, au succès du livre.

S.C. : C'est vrai, mais il y a quand même eu une émission de télévision la veille du démarrage du livre. Stéphane Hessel a été invité à l'émission de Taddei [*Ce soir (ou jamais !)*, sur Arte, le 19 octobre 2010]. Ce qui a été important dans le succès d'*Indignez-vous*, c'est, comme tous les best-sellers, une configuration de raisons : le livre est tombé pile à la fin des grandes manifestations contre la réforme des

retraites de Sarkozy, et au moment où la jeunesse reprenait le flambeau, activait à nouveau, la révolte. Taddei nous a téléphoné en disant « Je veux faire une émission sur la révolte de la jeunesse. Est-ce que Stéphane Hessel accepterait d'être là ? » Il a dit oui, et il a été brillant. Cette émission a compté, mais n'a pas été le facteur déclencheur du succès.

M.O. : Et justement, en parlant de mouvement de la jeunesse, le mouvement espagnol, *Los Indignados*, a repris le titre du livre. Est-ce que ce mouvement a été en contact avec Monsieur Hessel ?

S.C. : Bien sûr ! C'est étonnant, parce que c'est un mouvement qui l'a un peu débordé. Sur le plan politique, Stéphane Hessel était un social-démocrate. Il avait un mélange d'esprit libertaire, mais qui s'exprimait davantage culturellement, par son rapport à la poésie, son rapport à l'insolence que lui donnait sa formation culturelle. C'est un homme issu de la vieille Europe, cultivé à la Thomas Mann. Un homme du nord, profondément marqué par la culture allemande, même s'il a vécu l'essentiel de sa vie à Paris. L'Espagne l'a un petit peu débordé, comme si le mouvement se développait au-delà de lui. Les Indignés espagnols ont eu des contacts avec lui. Au moment où les Indignés avaient envahi le Parlement espagnol, il était un peu embêté. C'était un personnage profondément engagé, mais ce n'était pas non plus un révolutionnaire.

M.O. : Il voulait encourager un soulèvement pacifique.

S.C. : Oui, et pas seulement pacifique, sur le plan politique, il était vraiment social-démocrate. Il soutenait des personnalités socialistes, par exemple. Nous, on a, d'une certaine manière, activé quelque chose de plus libertaire. On en parlait avec lui, il ne niait pas du tout cela. Mais, à cause de son passé, son histoire dans la Résistance, il craignait toujours des débordements.

M.O. : Au départ, c'est vous-même qui êtes entrée en contact avec lui ? Comment cela s'est-il passé ?

S.C. : Nous, on travaillait, à Indigène éditions, depuis longtemps, dans ce rapport de la résistance et de la création, à travers les peuples issus de sociétés non-industrielles, pour qui l'art et la culture étaient une forme de résistance. On est allés vers les aborigènes d'Australie, vers les Amérindiens, vers le Tibet, toutes ces sociétés qui sont victimes de génocides culturels d'une certaine manière. On travaillait depuis longtemps sur cette question. On avait rencontré John Berger, l'écrivain anglais, à un salon du livre, environ un an avant de sortir *Indignez-vous !* et de rencontrer Stéphane Hessel. John Berger, avec qui on avait sympathisé, nous avait donné un petit texte écrit en anglais, qui s'appelle *Meanwhile*, et en français on l'a traduit par *Dans l'entre-temps, réflexion sur le fascisme économique* – c'est lui qui a voulu ce titre en français – et il nous a donné ce texte en disant « J'aime bien ce que vous faites. Je vous donne ce petit texte. J'aimerais bien en avoir une édition française. » Comme le texte était tout petit, on a créé cette petite collection de 32 pages, et peu onéreuse, à 3 euros. On a trouvé que c'était un bon format. On n'est pas une maison d'édition classique. Ce qui nous intéresse à travers le livre, c'est de créer des événements qui ont une répercussion sociale et une répercussion sur les consciences. On a très vite trouvé que ce petit format pouvait toucher un public assez vaste. Donc, on a publié ce livre, qui a bien marché. On en a publié un deuxième, puis un troisième. Le troisième s'appelait *Je suis prof et je désobéis* (Bastien Cazals). Et ce livre est entré dans la liste des best-sellers. Donc, on a voulu continuer sur ce format. Un jour, Bastien Cazals nous a emmenés voir un film qui

était sur un vieux résistant, *Walter, retour en résistance* (film de Gilles Perret, sur Walter Bassan, ancien résistant et ancien déporté), qui était un ami de Stéphane Hessel. On a vu, au milieu du film, tout d'un coup, sur le plateau des Glières, Stéphane Hessel intervenir pour protester contre la manière dont Sarkozy s'était approprié la Résistance. Il haranguait la jeunesse en disant : « Vous avez un devoir d'indignation ! » On connaissait le personnage, mais un peu vaguement, comme beaucoup de gens à l'époque. On s'est dit que cela ferait un beau titre pour notre petite collection « Ceux qui marchent contre le vent », et comme par ailleurs, on est aussi auteurs, Jean-Pierre Barou et moi-même publions au Seuil, et lui avait publié son autobiographie au Seuil. Donc on a obtenu son numéro de téléphone, on lui a téléphoné et on lui a dit « Est-ce que vous êtes d'accord pour qu'on fasse une série d'entretiens qui donneront lieu à un petit livre ? » Au départ, on voulait l'appeler *Le devoir d'indignation*.

M.O. : Est-ce vous qui avez suggéré le titre *Indignez-vous !*, plus tard ?

S.C. : Cela s'est imposé au cours des rencontres, parce qu'on a très vite compris l'efficacité du message de ce personnage très légitime et qui est aussi dans l'oralité. Ce n'est pas un écrivain, Stéphane Hessel. C'est un homme par qui des messages passent et, au cours des entretiens, on a très vite senti que son message pouvait créer quelque chose, pouvait avoir un effet. C'est pour cela qu'un jour je lui ai suggéré ce titre – à l'époque on se vouvoyait encore – en lui disant : « Est-ce que vous êtes d'accord pour qu'on appelle ça *Indignez-vous* ? » Je me suis dit qu'une injonction allait créer un événement. Cela faisait longtemps qu'on travaillait, Jean-Pierre et moi, dans cette optique-là. On espérait une sorte de réveil des consciences, de sursaut des consciences dans un monde qui était affligeant, et on s'est dit « Ce personnage va porter ce cri ».

M.O. : Vous parliez tout à l'heure du format de ce petit livre. Pour ce qui est du fond, certains écrivains ont dénigré son succès en disant que l'argumentation était pauvre et qu'il n'y avait pas de socle théorique. Qu'est-ce que vous avez à répondre à cela ?

S.C. : D'abord, je pense que le message du texte est beaucoup plus complexe qu'ils ne pensent au premier niveau. Vous l'avez dit, tout d'abord c'est un appel, ensuite c'est un appel à la non-violence. Si vous examinez le texte, notamment quand il raconte que ces Palestiniens marchent tous les jours vers ce fameux mur de la honte en jetant des pierres, mais de façon pacifique, en jetant des cris de révolte davantage. Il dit que ce qui est intéressant c'est cette non-violence – et d'ailleurs les Israéliens disent que c'est du « terrorisme non-violent », c'est intéressant cette idée que les Israéliens aillent dire que la non violence puissent être un terrorisme. Vous voyez, ces messages, ce ne sont pas des messages auxquels on est habitué en Occident, et donc je pense que beaucoup de gens n'ont pas compris le texte. D'ailleurs souvent quand on en parle, on fait des sortes d'explications de texte. Par ailleurs, c'est un appel à l'engagement. Le passage sur Sartre, c'est nous qui l'avons suggéré, comme il nous parlait beaucoup de Sartre qui avait été un personnage important dans sa génération. Il l'avait aidé à prendre conscience de cette notion d'engagement et à le précipiter lui-même dans l'engagement. On a fouillé un peu autour du texte, comme toute conversation. Comme ce livre est une conversation, forcément les interlocuteurs s'émulent l'un et l'autre, ils rajoutent des choses. Donc quand on a transcrit le texte, on a développé le passage sur Sartre. Au delà de l'engagement du texte, c'est vrai que je pense que ses critiques n'ont pas tout à fait

tort. Par exemple, il y a un critique du *Monde* qui a eu un mot très juste. Il a dit : « C'est une sorte d'objet non-identifié ». Je pense que ce n'est pas faux. Ce qui a autant compté que le message, c'est l'objet. C'est ce que Stéphane Hessel en a fait, et nous comme éditeurs, et les libraires indépendants, et tous les gens qui ont repris le texte. C'est une espèce d'objet qui, tout à coup, a permis de cristalliser quelque chose qui était dans l'air, de rassembler cet esprit de révolte qui couvait de façon indistincte. En disant cela, ils critiquent, mais il n'ont pas tort. C'est un appel, et le petit livre a été une sorte d'objet non-violent, peut-être, non-identifié, oui pourquoi pas. Quand Fillon a dit « Attention, l'indignation c'est dangereux », c'était vraiment spécieux. Stéphane n'a jamais dit « C'est un message unique, qui n'a jamais été dit ». Il reprenait l'esprit de la Résistance. Il a rappelé en un texte très concis, puissant par sa brièveté, des choses fondamentales, à savoir que le Conseil National de la Résistance avait créé la Sécurité Sociale, tous ces biens sociaux. Il y a beaucoup de gens qui ne le savaient pas. Nous, on a été sidérés de voir des journalistes qui découvraient ces choses-là à travers le texte de Stéphane Hessel. Donc ce n'est pas tout à fait vrai : le message, le contenu avait du sens, mais c'est vrai que le livre en soi était aussi d'un point de vue formel quelque chose de neuf.

M.O. : J'ai lu dans *Irrésistible optimiste* une citation de Michel Rocard qui parle du désintéressement total de Stéphane Hessel qui aurait refusé tout droit d'auteur. Est-ce que vous confirmez ?

S.C : Oui, c'est vrai. C'était un homme profondément désintéressé. On a imprimé le livre au tout début à 8000 exemplaires, donc on pensait que le livre marcherait, mais jamais personne – même si nous, on avait des espoirs secrets, cachés – n'a pensé qu'il aurait l'impact qu'il a eu. Au début on a dit à Stéphane « On va vous faire un contrat comme on fait toujours », il a refusé. A la limite, il ne savait même pas que ça allait devenir un livre. C'est un homme comme ça, qui est dans une générosité, une disponibilité totale. Il disait facilement oui, et donc quand il nous a dit oui, il n'anticipait pas ce que ça allait devenir, cette espèce de flambée. Quand ça a commencé à marcher, on sentait que ça démarrait, on lui a dit « Stéphane, là maintenant, on va te faire un contrat d'auteur ». Il n'a pas voulu. Une troisième fois, on lui a demandé, il n'a toujours pas voulu. Donc, on a fait une sorte d'accord moral avec lui : on dissolvait la notion de droits d'auteur puisqu'il n'en voulait - et, pour des raisons fiscales, s'il n'en voulait pas, il fallait les dissoudre – mais aux vues du succès du livre, on ferait, en accord avec lui, régulièrement, des dons à des causes qui lui étaient importantes. Donc on fait de très nombreux dons à La Voix de l'enfant, qui est une organisation dont il était membre, au Tribunal Russell sur la Palestine, au Collegium, etc. On va en faire une cette année encore, avec ce qu'il reste de bénéfices, à sa petite fille, Sarah Lecarpentier. Il avait manifesté qu'il avait envie de l'aider parce qu'elle a une compagnie théâtrale très engagée justement. Donc on est allés voir ses pièces, ça nous a plu. Au delà de la mort de Stéphane, on a pensé que ça lui aurait fait plaisir d'aider ce travail. C'était un homme d'une générosité totale. Son épouse nous a dit quand il est mort « Je me suis aperçue que l'essentiel de son salaire partait en dons à des organismes de ci de là ». Elle n'était même pas au courant ! Et ça, ça a compté dans le succès du livre. C'était un homme qui était au-dessus de tout soupçon. On se disait « Un homme comme ça, au fond, il n'a pas d'intérêts à nous dire ce qu'il nous dit. Sa légitimité à la fois de grand personnage - qui avait engagé sa vie dans la Résistance, dans la lutte pour les droits de l'homme, dans la lutte pour la justice un peu partout dans le monde, dans la lutte pour les sans-papiers - a beaucoup contribué au succès. Il a porté le livre par ça. C'était un

homme d'une probité morale, éthique, irréprochable, et sa générosité s'exprimait partout. Je me souviens l'avoir accompagné quand le livre est sorti en Allemagne, en Italie, en Espagne. J'allais le chercher chez lui à 5 heures du matin pour aller prendre l'avion. Il sortait devant chez lui, il engageait la conversation avec un éboueur, mais aussi facilement qu'il parlait au Dalaï-lama ou à un grand de ce monde. Il était vraiment là. C'était un homme qui par sa vie-même, son être-même respirait la justice, l'égalité.

M.O. : C'est intéressant de voir qu'il portait ses valeurs à l'extérieur et pas seulement dans son travail.

S.C. : Voilà, il les incarnait vraiment et ça, ça comptait profondément. Je crois que les gens n'avaient pas de doutes là-dessus et au fond ils respectaient profondément la conformité de l'homme avec ses idées.

M.O. : Et aujourd'hui, quatre ans plus tard, à votre avis, quel est l'héritage laissé par ce petit livre ?

S.C. : Je pense qu'il est énorme, l'héritage. Il a quand même ébranlé la planète. Vous avez vu ce qu'avait dit Angela Davis en parlant de Occupy Wall Street, elle a dit « Au fond, c'est la première fois depuis les années 60 qu'on remet en cause le fondement libéral capitaliste de la société américaine. Aux Etats-Unis, toutes les mesures au sein des banques pour essayer d'introduire un peu de probité financière, de pureté financière, de purification financière, de gestion des profits, tout ça est dû à ce petit livre. Il a eu des effets pratiques très concrets, qui se passent en Espagne : cette espèce de remise en cause de la démocratie représentative. Et en même temps, il y a eu une sorte d'omerta de la presse. La presse française, par exemple, n'a rien rapporté de ce qui se passait en Espagne. Nous, on a beaucoup d'amis qui vivent en Espagne qui nous racontent, qui assistent à des réunions politiques au niveau des communes. Il y a vraiment une réinvention de la démocratie. Le fait par exemple, qu'un parti comme Podemos ait eu le succès qu'il a eu aux élections, c'est quelque chose qui a découlé d'*Indignez-vous* ! Le mouvement tunisien, très tôt, en janvier 2011 - suite à l'immolation de Mohamed Bouazizi, quand la Tunisie s'est ébranlée et a chassé Ben Ali - s'est beaucoup réclamé d'*Indignez-vous* ! Tous ces mouvements sont en cours aujourd'hui. Quelque chose a changé et une nouvelle société s'est mise en marche d'une certaine manière, mais dans une sorte de réalisme. Il y a beaucoup de gens qui disent « Les Indignés, qu'est-ce qu'il en reste aujourd'hui ? » Je pense que ce n'est pas si simple que ça. Comme c'est une nouvelle forme de politique, beaucoup plus horizontale, beaucoup plus concrète, c'est un mouvement qui remet en cause la légitimité des partis. Donc on n'a pas forcément les grilles de lecture pour mesurer ce qui a changé, mais en même temps, je pense que les choses ont changé profondément, un tas de mouvements qui ont ébranlé les vieilles fondations politiques du monde sont en marche.

M.O. : Oui, on ressent ce réveil des consciences qui persiste.

S.C. : Oui, et dans le monde entier ! Nous, on reçoit toujours des messages. Au niveau des réseaux sociaux, tout ça bouge beaucoup. On recevait beaucoup de mails de gens de toutes générations qui nous disaient : « C'est formidable, transmettez notre admiration à Stéphane Hessel ». Il a transcendé les classes sociales. C'était un homme du consensus d'une certaine manière. Encore une fois, ce n'était pas un excité révolutionnaire. On dit que c'était un homme de gauche, oui, mais le succès d'*Indignez-vous* ! a été porté aussi bien par de vieux résistants

octogénaires que par de jeunes adolescents en pleine rébellion contre l'autorité de leurs aînés. Il a transcendé les classes sociales, il a transcendé les partis politiques. Il a réuni. Il a rassemblé une révolte. Il a donné à la fois une légitimité à la révolte, et un bonheur à la révolte. C'était un homme du bonheur, Stéphane Hessel. Il a redonné foi, une foi très laïque, la foi dans un changement possible.

M.O. : Et vous, en tant qu'éditeurs, dans cet après- *Indignez-vous !*, est-ce que vous sentez que vous avez un rôle à jouer auprès de la jeunesse ?

S.C. : Oui, on nous sollicite beaucoup. C'est agréable parce qu'en raison du succès d'*Indignez-vous !*, tout le soubassement du travail qu'on a fait est devenu perceptible. Les gens l'identifient mieux et s'adressent à nous plus facilement. Et c'est vrai, je crois qu'on a un rôle à jouer dans la défense, toujours, de la non-violence. Je pense que c'est la marque des combats de demain. Stéphane l'a très bien dit dans son texte, et encore une fois je crois que ça n'a pas toujours été bien compris, il a dit au fond « Choisissons la non-violence, parce qu'elle est plus efficace que la violence ». C'est au nom de l'efficacité qu'il choisissait la non-violence. Je ne crois pas du tout que la jeunesse soit désengagée, au contraire, elle est engagée différemment. Elle est engagée dans cette non-violence. Je pense que c'est à travers cette génération que la non-violence pourra enfin être pratiquée, mise en scène. Le système même des partis est une violence terrible. La violence, elle est partout dans nos sociétés prétendument démocratiques. Les jeunes générations le savent, le sentent. Elles sont à la fois dans une démarche de libération sur le plan politique, mais aussi une démarche de libération intérieure. Aujourd'hui, je pense qu'il ne peut pas y avoir de révolte extérieure ou politique si on n'a pas fait un travail d'engagement intérieur. L'engagement intérieur, c'est ce que nous ont appris des sociétés comme la société tibétaine, comme les Aborigènes, comme les Amérindiens, qui agissent sur la conscience de l'individu. On ne peut pas prétendre avoir une action politique extérieure, efficace et non violente, si on ne s'est pas transformé aussi soi-même d'une certaine manière. Aujourd'hui, on a les moyens de le faire dans des perspectives non religieuses, grâce aux travaux des neurosciences. Aujourd'hui, on sait qu'on peut modifier les empreintes dans son cerveau. Certaines choses dont on pense qu'elles sont des vérités éternelles, comme « l'homme est un loup pour l'homme » par exemple, on se rend bien compte que c'est une empreinte mentale qu'on porte. Et si on arrive à les dissoudre ces empreintes-là, on peut en engendrer de nouvelles. Je pense que c'est ça le changement à l'avenir. Ce n'est pas partir avec une faucille sous le bras à l'assaut de têtes qu'on va faire sauter sous prétexte qu'on est un révolutionnaire.

M.O. : Oui, c'est vrai mais malheureusement dans les sociétés occidentales, on est plus intéressé par le progrès matériel, extérieur, que spirituel.

S.C. : Oui, voilà. Mais je pense que Stéphane Hessel, c'était un homme comme ça. Par exemple, il avait un rapport extraordinaire à la poésie. C'était sa création, d'une certaine manière, il se créait à travers la poésie. Ce qui était assez fort chez lui, c'est qu'il disait souvent « Le mal, ou l'injuste, je ne le laisse pas passer sur moi ». Il avait sans doute appris ça dans les camps, cette façon de ne pas se laisser entacher par la haine. Je me souviens d'une des premières choses que lui a dites le Dalaï-lama quand on a organisé la rencontre avec lui. Il l'a vu arriver, cet homme qui avait vingt ans de plus que lui et qui marchait sans canne à 93 ans, et lui a dit « Au fond, vous marchez sans canne parce que vous n'avez pas de haine en vous. » Il a été le reflet de cela, et c'est ce à quoi le monde a réagi. C'était un homme profondément engagé,

mais sans haine. Et il portait ce message-là. C'était un homme dans le droit. Par exemple, en ce qui concerne sa position sur Israël, je me souviens quand on l'accompagnait qu'un des rares moments où il y a eu un incident, c'était dans une librairie, à Strasbourg, à Kléber où des sionistes israéliens se sont approchés de lui en le secouant, en l'invectivant, en l'insultant. Il est sorti de ses gonds, il a attrapé une femme par le collet et il lui a dit « Vous savez, j'aime Israël plus que vous ! » et je pense que c'était vrai. Au fond, la seule chose qu'il reprochait à Israël, c'est de sortir du droit international. Il n'a jamais pris de position terrorisante à propos d'Israël. Et justement, c'est parce qu'il aimait Israël et qu'il avait eu espoir en ce que cet Etat allait pouvoir engendrer de neuf. C'est pour ça qu'il était d'autant plus sévère à l'égard d'Israël de violer le droit international. Sa position, elle est complètement claire : il dit simplement « il y a eu violation du droit international et Israël est coupable ». D'ailleurs, ce passage du livre est le passage qui a le plus suscité de critiques et de violence. Quand il dit au fond « Israël est coupable d'un crime de guerre, d'un crime contre l'humanité. » Il le disait avec un calme et une sérénité parfaite.

M.O. : J'ai une dernière question pour vous, au sujet de votre formation. J'ai lu que vous étiez normalienne, spécialiste de littérature et des civilisations anglo-américaines. Vous avez enseigné à l'université. Pourquoi n'être pas restée dans le domaine universitaire ? Est-ce que pour vous engagement et université ne sont pas compatibles ?

S.C. : Pour tout vous dire, je pense que quand je suis entrée à l'Ecole Normale Supérieure, j'ai été effarée et je me suis dit « Au fond, je vais vivre pour ne faire qu'entrer dans une empreinte mentale qui a été créée pour moi, avant moi et dont je ne vais faire qu'assurer le statu quo et la perpétuité. Et ça, ça m'a effaré. Je me suis dit « On ne peut pas vivre une vie qui n'est que la répétition de la vie des autres et la répétition d'un schéma de pensée ». Or, pour moi, la pensée et la conscience, c'est une aventure et une vie n'a de sens que si elle conduit cette aventure. Aujourd'hui, je vous dis ça d'une manière presque cérébrale, mais ça n'a pas été du tout comme ça. Ça a vraiment été une impossibilité. Je me suis trouvée à 20 ans face à cette possibilité que tous m'engageaient à suivre. Mes parents, qui étaient eux-mêmes enseignants, disaient « Mais tu es folle ! C'est une voie toute tracée, c'est formidable, c'est le passeport vers un tas de choses. Reste à Normal Sup'. » J'ai démissionné et ils ne comprenaient pas du tout. Ils ont mis une vie, d'ailleurs, à comprendre. Peut-être qu'avec le succès d'*Indignez-vous* ! ils ont compris ce que j'avais espéré faire... C'était en moi une impossibilité d'entrer dans ce schéma pré-établi, ce schéma universitaire. Alors, il y a des universitaires qui ont fait des choses formidables, qui ont révolutionné la pensée, des gens comme Foucault, Sartre aussi à sa façon. Je n'en fais pas non plus une règle, mais pour moi, c'était impossible, physiquement impossible de vivre ma vie comme ça, sur ces bases-là. C'était dû aussi à ma vie, ayant grandi très tôt dans des sociétés pour qui le savoir, ça n'est pas ce qu'il est chez nous. Au fond, le savoir, chez nous, c'est avoir une tête et la remplir, avoir un cerveau et le remplir de connaissances, alors que dans ces sociétés-là, on a un cerveau, un organe cérébral, et un corps, un cœur. Tout ça, on le forme pour être en état de perpétuelle ouverture. On ne clôt pas ce réceptacle. Je l'ai vu, très tôt, grâce à mes voyages et mes contacts avec d'autres sociétés qui privilégiaient une forme de savoir oral mais qui a cette supériorité, qui est incarné par des chaires, des êtres humains. Il engage et dans ce sens, c'est un engagement.

Pour moi, le savoir étant un engagement, je n'ai pas pu entrer dans une définition du savoir qui n'est pas un engagement.

Deuxième partie de l'entretien : Jean-Pierre Barou.

M.O. : Je fais une thèse sur l'évolution des modes d'intervention des intellectuels engagés, avec notamment une étude de cas sur Sartre, et une étude de cas sur Hessel.

J-P. B. : J'ai connu les deux. Vous avez vu que dans *Indignez-Vous !*, le socle intellectuel dont se revendique Stéphane, c'est Sartre. Le moment où il se réfère à Sartre, c'est pour dire « L'homme est responsable ». Il ne veut pas faire porter sa responsabilité à quelqu'un d'autre qu'à lui-même. Et je crois me souvenir que Stéphane emploie le mot « anarchiste », c'est un message anarchiste. Sa référence, et ça, il ne cessera de le dire, c'est Sartre, donc un engagement qui vous engage vous-même, qui fait que vous n'êtes pas spectateur sur le bord de la route, mais vous êtes engagé à titre personnel. Donc quand on connaît un peu l'œuvre de Sartre, on sait évidemment que c'est l'acte qui va compter, c'est acter sa vie – même s'il ne l'a pas toujours fait lui-même –, Sartre nous renvoie à notre responsabilité personnelle. C'est ça, l'engagement selon Stéphane, et en effet, on peut considérer que c'est une bonne définition de l'engagement et on peut considérer que la place qu'occupe cette responsabilité qui n'appartient qu'à vous-même vous met sur ce terreau d'anarchiste. Ce qui est intéressant, c'est que cette façon de parler de Sartre, de sa part, ce n'est pas la façon dont on parlait de Sartre du vivant de Sartre. La notion d'engagement du vivant de Sartre était trop accolée à des notions de lutte des classes, c'est-à-dire qu'on s'associait à de grands ensembles humains, et à ce titre, parfois, votre responsabilité personnelle se trouvait diluée. Par exemple, pour ceux qui adhéraient au Parti Communiste Français, elle était diluée. Sartre étant compagnon de route du Parti Communiste, néanmoins, il s'est aussi dilué dans cette affaire, plus qu'il ne l'aurait voulu. Pour le préfacier d'*Indignez-vous !* en Espagne, José Luis Sampedro, tout intellectuel aujourd'hui ne peut être qu'anarchiste, c'est-à-dire revendiquer son indépendance. Donc, on voit que la notion dont Sartre apparaît comme porteur, à travers Stéphane - José Luis Sampedro ne se revendiquant pas de Sartre, mais de son expérience à lui - a mué, s'est métamorphosée de l'engagement qui était perçu à travers l'histoire. Aujourd'hui, cette liberté individuelle fait face au genre humain. Les données sont beaucoup moins ancrées dans des face-à-face de lutte des classes, et d'où, à mon avis, le renforcement de la responsabilité individuelle. Si je n'ai plus pour m'aider à m'engager de grands schémas idéologiques tels qu'ils existaient au temps de Sartre, alors ma responsabilité individuelle n'en devient que plus importante. Sartre revendiquait cette notion de responsabilité individuelle, mais on ne l'a pas toujours bien vu parce que c'était noyé dans cette espèce de combat de grandes forces qui s'opposaient, et aujourd'hui comme elles se sont atténuées, comme elles ont même disparu, il y a un scepticisme devant ces grandes catégories, alors la responsabilité individuelle prend toute son importance. On est passé d'un engagement comme on l'imagine à l'époque des grandes manifestations, des grands clivages, des guerres d'indépendances, des guerres anticoloniales – qui se sont avérées d'ailleurs, sur le plan du résultat, assez piteuses – à un engagement qui revient aujourd'hui vers votre responsabilité individuelle. C'est à vous de vous déterminer, avec des critères qui sont les vôtres, en fonction de votre conscience, de votre raison, d'analyses qui vous sont propres, avant d'aller rejoindre tel ou tel camp. Vous devez préalablement vous

livrer à ce travail de réflexion, sans tenir compte d'aucun avis extérieur à votre conscience – en tout cas, pas à un premier stade. On a glissé. Ce qui est curieux, c'est que ceux qui glissent se revendiquent quand même de Sartre, parce que c'est quand même ça l'existentialisme, c'est ça la notion de liberté. Il y a une affirmation vers une position, non pas plus individualiste, mais qui engage votre responsabilité d'être humain. Je pense que c'est un des grands moments dans lequel nous nous trouvons aujourd'hui.

M.O. : Et ça rejoint votre travail sur l'éveil de la conscience justement, comme un nouvel humanisme.

J-P. B : Sans doute. Ça rejoint surtout une notion de vigilance. Il ne faut pas se prêter à des réponses rapides. La notion de conscience est une notion qu'on redécouvre complètement aujourd'hui. Ce qu'elle était à l'époque de Sartre, de Camus et de Simone de Beauvoir est différent de ce qu'elle est aujourd'hui. Encore que Sartre a eu des prémonitions, dans un texte qui s'appelle *La transcendance de l'ego*, son premier texte philosophique. On voit qu'il tourne déjà autour de la notion de transcendance. Elle est indicative d'une position de la conscience qui serait peut-être, par instants, transhistorique. Cette transhistoricité ne veut pas pour autant dire que ma conscience m'échappe. Moi-même, je peux me placer, en étant porteur et responsable d'une conscience, dans une transhistoricité. Merleau-Ponty et Sartre l'ont dit : la conscience est à faire, elle n'est pas donnée, elle est à construire. Cette position-là s'est trouvée renforcée par les travaux des neurologues, des sciences cognitives, mais elle va de plus en plus dans le sens de la responsabilité. Vous avez une conscience, vous en êtes responsable. Ce n'est pas un paquet cadeau. Vous avez à faire avec, vous avez à la bâtir, vous avez à la construire. Donc là, on est dans une démarche qui glisse vers l'intériorité, ce qui fait que l'engagement est peut-être moins visible aujourd'hui. Mais quand même, je pense qu'il y a un déclin de l'engagement. Les gens se sont repliés sur eux-mêmes. Ce dont on souffre beaucoup en France, c'est la médiatisation. On veut être vu. Je ne nommerai pas quelqu'un qui est très connu – et en plus, paraît-il que vous l'avez interviewé - mais qui m'a dit un jour « Il faut faire un livre tous les deux ans, sinon on vous oublie. » On n'a pas à dire du mal de quelqu'un parce qu'on n'est pas d'accord avec lui, mais tout ça ne me concerne pas. Je pense qu'il va se passer des choses. J'accorde, avec Sylvie, beaucoup d'importance au mouvement des Indignés, qui est très mal compris en France, qui est tout à fait sous-estimé, qui est confondu avec des mouvements de masse un peu difformes et incultes, ce qui n'est pas vrai du tout. Le mouvement des Indignés est né en Espagne, et ce n'est pas n'importe quel pays. C'est l'Espagne dont Camus disait « C'est la patrie des rebelles » et c'est vrai qu'elle l'est dans son histoire. Camus avait du sang espagnol par sa mère dans les veines. Je crois qu'il y a quelque chose qui est en train de se jouer. Dans cet espace, ceux qui se livrent à des calculs ne vont pas pouvoir intervenir. Cet espace est trop électrique. Le positionnement intellectuel est tellement lié aux médias, tellement lié à la presse. Il y a des intellectuels français qui existent parce que le journal *Le Monde* les fait exister. Au niveau des lectures réelles, ils ne sont pas si présents que ça, mais ils ont maintenant une histoire, des habitudes, des connivences, ce sont les mêmes qui s'adressent aux mêmes. *Le Monde* entretient un groupuscule d'intellectuels qui semblent engagés, mais au niveau de la jeunesse et de l'Europe, je n'en suis pas très sûr.

M.O. : Vous parlez justement de la médiatisation. Ne pensez-vous pas que les réseaux sociaux permettent à ses jeunes de s'engager ?

J-P. B. : Là encore, on est devant quelque chose d'un peu inconnu. Les réseaux sociaux, c'est qui ? Je n'aime pas la notion de leader. Je n'aime pas que quelqu'un soit un porte-parole. Peut-être qu'après tout, cela coïncide parfaitement avec ce qu'on disait avant, ces réseaux ne font qu'engager ceux qui s'engagent au regard d'eux-mêmes. Et à ce titre, ils n'envisagent pas d'exercer un leadership. Exercer un leadership, c'est quand même au détriment de la conscience de l'Autre. Les partis politiques, pour moi, sont une offense à la conscience. Il y a un très beau texte de Simone Weil, qui s'appelle *Note sur la suppression générale des partis politiques*, qu'elle a écrit à Londres en 1940, mais qui paraît après sa mort en 1943. J'ai connu Sartre, j'ai connu Simone de Beauvoir. C'étaient des gens qui avaient un véritable talent, qui avaient du talent, ils avaient du talent, ils avaient du talent ! Le talent fait que vous pouvez intervenir aussi bien auprès des intellectuels qu'auprès d'un public beaucoup plus large. Vous faites une pièce de théâtre, vous pouvez toucher un public beaucoup plus large. Vous faites un essai, comme *L'Être et le Néant* qui est un essai difficile mais extrêmement important, vous n'allez évidemment pas toucher un public large, mais je crois que les penseurs patentés sont très restreints sur le plan de leur production. Si je vous interrogeais là – je ne veux pas vous donner de nom propre –, ce monsieur citez-moi un livre de lui, un livre ! Alors que si je vous dis « Citez-moi un livre de Sartre », vous allez me dire « *L'Être et le Néant* ». « Citez-moi un livre de Simone de Beauvoir », vous allez me dire « *Le Deuxième Sexe* ». « Citez-moi un livre de Camus », vous allez me dire « *L'Homme révolté* ». Ils [les intellectuels d'aujourd'hui] ne marquent pas leur époque. Je vous défie de me donner un titre d'eux ! Ils renouvellent, ils renouvellent, ils produisent, ils produisent. Il meurt jeune, mais combien de livres au total Camus a-t-il écrit ? Il a écrit beaucoup d'articles, il est resté très présent, mais il a écrit *l'Homme révolté*, *La Peste*, *l'Étranger*, quelques recueils de nouvelles, etc. Mais, il n'a pas une production à outrance parce que c'est un homme qui marque des arrêts dans son travail, qui se retire dans le couvent des frères dominicains de St Maximin. Ce sont des gens qui ont une progression, non pas plus lente, mais qui est plus respectueuse de la notion de conscience. En même temps, je trouve que ce n'est pas du tout négatif. En France, c'est lamentable, on est dans une situation politique absolument inouïe, lamentablement dégradée, avec une gauche qui n'a plus de sens, avec une droite qui continue de lui tenir la dragée haute alors qu'on devrait constituer une sorte d'unité, comme ont su faire les Allemands. Angela Merkel, elle sait faire ça, nous on ne sait pas faire ça, et ça va nous coûter très cher, peut-être avec la venue au pouvoir du Front National, bien que je le croie incompétent. Mais peut-être qu'il va prendre une place qu'il n'a jamais occupée. La fonction de l'intellectuel aujourd'hui, elle est en danger et c'est lui qui l'a mise en danger. Elle est en danger parce qu'elle n'a plus d'échos. Ce sont des échos très restreints. Parmi les plus brillants, par exemple, Alain Badiou est quelqu'un de brillant mais il reste dans la même sphère. Camus et Sartre touchaient un très grand nombre de gens, pas un très grand public, non je n'aime pas cette notion. Un grand nombre de gens. Aujourd'hui, les intellectuels sont confinés dans des cercles restreints qui n'agissent plus. Il faut avoir la capacité de faire une pièce de théâtre, il faut avoir la capacité d'écrire un roman brillant, il faut avoir la capacité d'écrire un essai. Ces gens-là, ils avaient tout ça !

M.O. : Donc aujourd'hui, vous pensez qu'il n'y a aucun intellectuel en France qui puisse insuffler un changement.

J-P. B. : En France, non. Je pense que, par exemple, un intellectuel aux Etats-Unis comme Chomsky est sans équivalent en France. Même si ce n'est pas tout à fait le terme qu'on pourrait lui appliquer, je pense que Cohn-Bendit est quelqu'un qui a une trempe, qui a une humanité. Mais, vous voyez bien, donnez-moi l'équivalent de Foucault ? Donnez-moi l'équivalent de Roland Barthes ? Il y a des gens qui sont très connus, mais est-ce qu'ils sont comparables ? Vous vous rendez compte, le courage d'un Foucault, par exemple, que j'ai connu aussi ! Foucault était quelqu'un qui a été très courageux. Il a souvent été attaqué très férocement à son époque par des gens qui étaient clivés. Or lui, il transcendait tous ces clivages. Il se heurte frontalement à Sartre. C'est lui qui se heurte à Sartre d'abord, et Sartre qui répond ensuite à Foucault. Ces grands débats intellectuels n'existent plus. Foucault est plutôt vachard avec Sartre, mais il a le droit, c'est le mouvement des idées. Mais aujourd'hui, il n'y a pas de grands débats, de grands élans, d'intellectuels qui soient capables de prendre la parole et vraiment de drainer des gens. Peut-être aussi parce que les gens eux-mêmes ont été frappés, touchés. Je crois beaucoup à ce mouvement des Indignés, même si ça paraît bizarre, ça paraît lointain, difforme, sans intelligence, ce n'est pas vrai.

M.O. : Je voudrais revenir sur votre vécu : vous avez connu Sartre pendant l'époque de *La Cause du peuple*, dans les années 70. Pouvez-vous raconter dans quel contexte vous l'avez connu ? Lui, et Simone de Beauvoir.

J-P. B. : Sartre, je l'ai connu un peu avant parce que j'avais fait une revue de littérature dont le premier numéro a été consacré à Paul Nizan. A cette époque, j'ai des contacts pas très importants, mais qui ont du sens pour lui. Ensuite, j'étais en charge, quand je militais, du secteur Renault, les usines Renault à Billancourt. C'est un lieu où, entraîné par les Maos, Sartre venait assez souvent. Je n'étais pas « clandestin » donc je pouvais m'exposer beaucoup plus que certains. J'étais aux portes de Billancourt pour capter des moments, ce que pensaient les ouvriers, comment ils réagissaient à certaines actions conduites par des établis dans l'entreprise. J'ai fait un article sur lui, c'est le jour où il monte sur un tonneau à Billancourt. Moi, j'étais là. J'ai fait un article où je raconte la vérité, sans flatteries aucunes, ces émotions de gens, certains admiratifs, à qui on expliquait qui il était. Ce texte, j'étais présent quand il le donne en exemple. Quand *Libération* s'est créée, je le voyais, j'allais chez lui et j'ai gardé les manuscrits de Sartre grâce à ça. J'allais chercher chez lui des manuscrits qu'il rédigeait pour *La Cause du Peuple*. Je montais dans son petit studio, il me les donnait, on parlait un peu, on échangeait. Il me voyait à travers Nizan, il me voyait à travers cet article. Il me voyait avec une liberté, un amour de la littérature. Tout ça, ça le satisfaisait d'une certaine façon. On échangeait vraiment. Je m'entendais bien avec Simone de Beauvoir. Avec lui, je n'ai pas eu vraiment ce qu'a pu avoir Pierre Victor, ou Benny Lévy, un échange intellectuel. C'était plutôt un échange humain, mais pas humain au sens étroit, plutôt dans le sens où mon humanité l'intéressait. Je l'accompagnais. Je l'ai accompagné deux ou trois fois à Billancourt. On est rentrés cachés dans une camionnette à Billancourt pour distribuer des tracts. On s'est fait virer par les vigiles. Je le tutoyais. On était copains. Évidemment, ça, ça laisse des traces beaucoup plus profondes que ce que je suis en train de vous dire. Une phrase de Sartre qui m'a profondément marqué et que j'aime beaucoup : « Si tu as quelque chose à dire, dis-le maintenant parce que dans 20 ans, ce sera trop tard. » Je trouve cette phrase absolument superbe. Vous voyez, ça, c'est la responsabilité individuelle. C'est la responsabilité qui ne se réfugie pas dans un futur de transformation de la société. Dis-le

maintenant, sinon quand tu le diras dans 20 ans, ce sera foutu, ce sera trop tard. Aujourd'hui, je pourrais parler avec lui de *L'Être et le Néant*, mais à l'époque, non. Je ne me serais pas hasardé sur ce terrain. Je pourrais parler de *La Transcendance de l'ego*, mais à l'époque, je ne me serais pas hasardé sur ce terrain. Avec Simone de Beauvoir, c'était pareil. A l'époque, je l'ai accompagnée dans une usine de femmes qui avait flambé, brûlé, où les femmes avaient été défigurées par le feu. Je lui avais dit « Venez » et elle avait fait un article qu'on va faire reparaître, qui est magnifique et complètement oublié, qui s'appelle « Aujourd'hui, en France, on peut tuer impunément. » Au fond, ce qui m'intéressait, ce que je voyais en eux, c'était plutôt des gens dans la littérature, dans la construction littéraire. Moi, je n'avais pas fait Normale Sup', j'étais ingénieur des arts et métiers, donc je n'avais pas l'envie ni le besoin d'échanger sur ce terrain qui les intéressait beaucoup bien sûr. Quand *Libération* se crée, *Paris Match* fait un reportage, et Sartre dit à (Serge) July « Je veux que ce soit Barou qui soit là. » Donc, c'est moi qui vais dans son studio quand la journaliste vient faire son reportage photo. *Paris Match* a publié une pleine page où on est tous les deux côte à côte en train de lire *Libération* dans sa première formule. C'est un signe d'une camaraderie. Certainement qu'il attendait plus de moi, mais je n'étais pas en état de le faire. C'était une époque difficile de ma vie. Quelqu'un d'autre aurait certainement tiré davantage profit de la situation que je ne l'ai fait à l'époque. J'étais en grande difficulté sur le plan personnel, des soucis qui se sont résolus dans le temps. J'étais plus à l'aise avec Foucault par exemple mais Foucault était plus jeune. Sartre m'impressionnait, même s'il faisait tout pour ne pas être impressionnant. La première chose qui frappe, c'est la fluidité de son intelligence, alors qu'il commençait déjà à être touché par ses problèmes cérébraux. Foucault était plus ludique, d'une certaine manière, ce que jamais n'a été Sartre, encore moins Simone de Beauvoir. Il y avait quelque chose de ludique chez Foucault, qui correspond aussi à ses audaces d'écriture, aller chercher les choses qui sont à la marge de l'histoire, l'homosexualité qui comptait beaucoup pour lui et qui était un refuge, une source. C'était tout autre chose qu'avec Sartre.

M.O. : Et j'ai lu votre livre *Sartre et la violence des opprimés*, dans lequel vous traitez de l'évolution de la réflexion de Sartre sur les notions de violence et de terrorisme.

J-P. B. : Oui, il a bougé.

M.O. : Pensez-vous qu'il y ait eu également une évolution chez Stéphane Hessel de cette notion de violence ?

J-P. B. : Je pense que Stéphane n'a jamais été séduit par la violence. Jamais. C'est quelque chose qui le répugnait de par sa nature profonde. De façon naturelle, par essence, il était non-violent. On ne peut pas aimer autant qu'il l'a aimé Apollinaire, la poésie, et être dans la violence. Sartre, ce n'était pas un poète du tout, enfin il aimait sans doute la poésie énormément. Donc voilà, je pense que Hessel, par nature, était dans ce refus de la violence. Pourtant, il ne connaissait pas bien Gandhi. Alors, une des raisons, sans doute, qui l'écartait de Gandhi, c'est qu'il pensait que c'était un homme dans le religieux et ça le révoltait plutôt. Or, ce n'est pas vrai, le religieux a sa place dans la pensée. Ce n'est pas aussi simple que ça. Ça, Sartre le comprend dans ses rencontres avec Pierre Victor. Je pense que Stéphane était inapte à la violence.

M.O. : J'ai une dernière question pour vous, mais plutôt par rapport à votre travail d'éditeur. A votre avis, est-ce qu'il y a un futur pour les maisons

d'édition engagées et atypiques comme la vôtre, dans une société qui se dirige vers le tout numérique et le divertissement instantané ?

J-P. B. : Oui et non. Oui, si vous êtes suffisamment aigu, si vous savez prendre la balle au bond, si vous savez saisir l'instant. Par définition, je dirai non. Si c'est une maison engagée parce qu'elle veut être engagée, elle n'a aucune chance. Moi, je ne me réveille pas le matin en me disant « Tiens, je suis un éditeur engagé ». Absolument pas. Sinon, on ne produirait pas de livres engagés. Ça doit aussi nous étonner, nous surprendre. Ce sont des invitations quotidiennes qu'on reçoit. Il n'y a pas un préambule. Si une maison d'édition se constitue en disant « On va faire une maison d'édition engagée », elle est foutue, elle n'aura pas lieu. Maintenant si elle est un peu ce que nous sommes nous, curieux, attentifs, un peu provocateurs, parce qu'on a envie de déranger, de bousculer, l'engagement peut passer par ces formes-là. Il ne peut plus passer par ce qu'on disait autrefois sur la lutte des classes, bien qu'il y ait encore des choses effrayantes qui existent encore. Il y a l'inégalité selon les couches sociales devant la mort, par exemple, des différences de longévité considérables. Mais je pense qu'on ne peut plus se caler, comme fait Mélançon avec les ouvriers. Et puis, ce n'est pas une attitude d'éditeur. Un éditeur, c'est quelqu'un qui est en éveil, qui cherche des coups si on peut dire, il faut qu'il vende, qu'il s'amuse, qu'il surprenne, qu'il soit un agitateur. Je n'ai pas le sentiment qu'une idée de l'engagement nous précède. L'engagement, je sais que c'est la responsabilité individuelle et je sais qu'elle engage de façon certaine une intériorité, celle de la conscience. A ce titre, ça ne sera jamais un programme.

Appendice B

I interviewed Bernard-Henry Lévy in his Parisian flat on 19th March 2014

- **M.O.: Monsieur Lévy, j'aimerais savoir tout d'abord comment vous vous définissez? Intellectuel engagé, écrivain, philosophe?**
- B.H.L.: Un écrivain engagé. Un écrivain engagé, c'est un intellectuel. Intellectuel engagé est un pléonasme.
- **M.O.: Etes-vous d'accord avec la définition d'intellectuel de Régis Debray selon laquelle l'intellectuel serait "quiconque" avec "un projet d'influence" et un "être constitutivement média-dépendant" ? (Interviewé par Pascal Boniface dans *Les intellectuels intègres*)**
- B.H.L.: Non. "Quiconque", je ne crois pas. Je crois qu'un intellectuel, c'est un écrivain, un philosophe, un artiste, un savant qui a un domaine de compétence ou d'excellence et qui en sort pour s'engager. C'est ça, un intellectuel. Donc, ce n'est pas "quiconque". Deuxièmement, ce n'est pas "un projet d'influence", en tout cas c'est un projet de justice, de défense. Et puis, "média-dépendant", oui, à son corps défendant. Moi, en ce qui me concerne, je n'ai pas un amour immodéré, contrairement à ce qu'on croit, pour les médias, loin s'en faut. J'y vais parce qu'il faut.
- **M.O.: Que pensez-vous de cette étiquette, que l'on vous colle souvent, d'intellectuel médiatique? Est-ce que vous l'assumez?**
- B.H.L.: Je l'assume pour la raison que je vous dis, c'est-à-dire qu'en effet si on rentre du Darfour, si on veut stopper la guerre de Bosnie, si on veut armer les Syriens démocrates, ou si on veut que Poutine s'arrête en Crimée, il vaut mieux le dire dans les médias. Tout intellectuel est médiatique. L'exercice de la pure pensée, l'exercice de la littérature tolère parfaitement le confinement dans une tour d'ivoire et de retrait du monde. Le fonctionnement de l'intellectuel ne le tolère pas. Il est impensable sans ce rapport aux médias. Que ça plaise ou pas. Qu'on aime ou pas. Moi, encore une fois, je ne suis pas *addicted*. Les périodes de ma vie où je suis le plus heureux, ce sont celles où je ne passe pas à la télévision, où je ne donne pas d'interview aux journaux, où je suis paisiblement avec les miens, à l'écart, à travailler. Mais, intellectuel sans médias, ça n'existe pas.
- **M.O.: Et c'est exactement la position que prend ma thèse. Vous rejetez l'idée selon laquelle vous vous seriez construit un réseau de connections politiques et médiatiques (Emission télévisée *Le Supplément*, Canal +, interviewé par Maitena Biraben, 02/03/2014). En quoi le terme de "réseau" vous dérange, vous pose problème ?**
- B.H.L.: Pour plusieurs raisons. Parce qu'il y a une connotation de cynisme dans le mot "réseau". Une connotation idéologique dans l'histoire de l'idéologie française que je n'aime pas non plus. Quelque chose de complotiste, que j'aime encore moins, Et puis enfin, c'est pas vrai, et c'est peut-être le plus important: c'est-à-dire que, le problème c'est pas d'avoir un réseau, le problème c'est de tirer les bonnes sonnettes, de frapper aux bonnes portes, quand on a quelque chose à dire et qu'on veut que sa parole dépasse le cercle de cette pièce. Ce qu'ils appellent le réseau d'ailleurs change à chaque fois, c'est pas toujours le même. Pour moi, ça veut dire quoi? François Hollande est dans mon réseau? Nicolas Sarkozy était dans mon réseau? L'un pour l'Histoire de l'Ukraine, l'autre pour la guerre de Lybie? Non, j'ai sonné à leur porte, point.

- **M.O.:** Vous parlez, dans *Réflexions sur la guerre, le mal et la fin de l'histoire* (2001), du syndrome du scaphandrier, le fameux thème sartrien de la mauvaise conscience de l'intellectuel. Est-ce que, pour vous, les intellectuels aujourd'hui souffrent toujours de cette mauvaise conscience?
- B.H.L.: Le syndrome du scaphandrier, c'est quoi? J'ai oublié...
- **M.O.:** Le fait que les intellectuels soient poursuivis par cette mauvaise conscience...
- B.H.L.: De ne pas être prolétaires?
- **M.O.:** Voilà, c'est ça.
- B.H.L.: Non, en tout cas, pas moi. Moi je suis, je crois, aussi peu que possible habité par la mauvaise conscience. Je me sens comptable du monde, et des malheurs du monde. Ça c'est autre chose. Je pense qu'on peut pas être un privilégié, comme je le suis, et... Enfin, je crois qu'il y a un rôle, une bonne fonction de la honte en politique, et si vous voulez, de la mauvaise conscience, c'est-à-dire sentir que la place que l'on occupe, elle est pour partie prise à l'autre. Cela je le pense au plus profond de moi-même, mais ça ne veut pas dire que je voudrais être un prolétaire, que je voudrais être un Darfourien, ou que je voudrais être un Ukrainien, comme autrefois on voulait être un prolétaire ou un Palestinien. Mais en revanche, j'aime pas la bonne conscience, voilà. La bonne conscience, c'est ce que Sartre appelait "le salaud".
- **M.O.:** J'aimerais aussi parler de Mai 68. Est-ce que votre engagement tout au long de votre carrière vous a permis d'effacer un rendez-vous à demi manqué avec Mai 68?
- B.H.L.: Non, Non... A demi manqué, oui, oui... mais pas vraiment manqué non plus. J'ai fait de la littérature là-dessus en effet. Tout cela était mêlé à une histoire d'amour à l'époque qui était en train de tourner très mal etcetera... Mais enfin, non, je crois que j'ai été contemporain de Mai 68, que je l'ai vécu néanmoins. Et puis, Mai 68, par ailleurs, par ma conception des choses, est un épiphénomène. Moi je crois plutôt à la Résistance, je crois plutôt à la Guerre d'Espagne, c'est plutôt dans cette mémoire-là que je m'inscris.
- **M.O.:** Vous avez publié le livre *Bangla Desh, Nationalisme dans la révolution*, en 73, et à ce moment-là, vous avez réalisé qu'un livre doit se défendre dans les médias et que l'Université n'est pas le meilleur lieu pour philosopher (*De la guerre en philosophie*, 2010). Pour vous, engagement et milieu universitaire seraient-ils incompatibles?
- B.H.L.: Non, ce n'est pas le meilleur lieu, c'est-à-dire qu'un universitaire qui souhaite encore porter une parole loin doit sortir des murs de l'Université, et c'est ce qu'a fait quelqu'un que je n'aimais pas, qui est Pierre Bourdieu, c'est ce qu'ont fait les universitaires dreyfusards qui ont signé des pétitions dans les journaux. Il faut en passer, là encore, par les journaux.
- **M.O.:** Dès 1976, à travers la Nouvelle Philosophie, vous avez condamné le recours à la violence, et les atrocités successives du 20ème siècle. Pourtant, vous avez fait passer des armes de l'Ukraine à la Bosnie dans les années 90 (Gilles Hertzog, Emission télévisée Le Supplément, Canal+, 02/03/2014) et vous disiez avoir une certaine "attirance" pour la guerre pendant la guerre de Bosnie (*Le Lys et la cendre*, 1996). Quel est votre rapport à la violence?

- B.H.L.: De la Turquie à la Bosnie. Mon rapport à la violence s'exprime dans le titre du livre que j'ai consacré à la Guerre de Libye, que vous avez lu j'imagine?
- **M.O.: Oui.**
- B.H.L.: ...Qui s'appelle *La Guerre sans l'aimer*. Je crois que la violence n'est porteuse de rien, rédemptrice de rien. J'ai parlé, oui peut-être, dans ces notes autobiographiques et sincères, qui étaient les notes qui accompagnaient *Réflexions sur la Guerre*, je dis peut-être ici ou là qu'il y a, même en moi, une attirance pour la guerre. Enfin ce n'est pas la tonalité dominante. Je dis surtout, dans ce livre, la laideur de la guerre ou l'horreur que m'inspire la guerre, la débâcle de l'humain dans la guerre. Avoir le culte de la guerre, c'est penser que les hommes se hissent au-dessus d'eux-mêmes. Moi je crois l'inverse, qu'ils sont en-dessous d'eux-mêmes dans la guerre.
- **M.O.: J'ai beaucoup aimé le personnage du "Sartron" (*Eloge des intellectuels*, 1987). Vous dites que le "Sartron", ce mélange de Sartre et de Aron, a paralysé le débat intellectuel. Pour vous, est-ce que le temps, aujourd'hui, n'est plus aux débats théoriques, aux débats intellectuels?**
- B.H.L.: Il revient.
- **M.O.: Sous quelle forme?**
- B.H.L.: Il croise le politique. Il y a aujourd'hui un vrai débat sur la démocratie, il y a un vrai débat sur le devoir d'ingérence, un vrai débat sur la souveraineté des peuples, qui recoupent la question Poutine, qui recoupent les révolutions arabes, etc. Il y a de nouveau des affrontements d'une grande violence.
- **M.O.: Vous dites dans *Le Lys et la Cendre* (1996), que vous vous ennuyez des débats théoriques et vous parlez de votre envie de départ vers la Bosnie. Vous dites: "Ainsi va la vie dans cette province qu'est devenue la France..." Est-ce que la France vous ennue? N'avez-vous pas de "combats" à mener en France?**
- B.H.L.: Oui et non. Il y a des combats à mener en France, oui...Mais...je respire mieux à Kiev, à Benghazi, à Djouba, dans les Monts Noubas, qu'à Paris. Ça c'est vrai, mais je ne peux pas dire ça. Mais c'est sûr que dans le débat du militant et de l'aventurier, du Roger Stéphane à la place de Sartre et etcetera, je suis plus près de l'aventurier, je l'ai toujours été.
- **M.O.: Vos interventions d'ailleurs, sur le terrain constitueraient, selon Julien Benda, une "trahison des clercs" (1927). Comment vous vous placez par rapport à cela? Est-ce que vous pensez que c'est une trahison?**
- B.H.L.: Non. Moi je crois que ce que Julien Benda appelle "la trahison des clercs", c'est le renoncement à l'universel. Moi je n'y renonce pas, mais je tente de le faire valoir. Il y a deux trahisons des clercs: il y a celle à laquelle pense Benda, qui est le renoncement à l'universel, et puis il y en a une deuxième, qui est le renoncement à faire valoir l'universel, à lui donner dans chaque situation sa valeur, à l'appliquer. Ça, c'est une autre trahison.
- **M.O.: J'aimerais qu'on parle d'un genre, le romanquête. Pensez-vous que la part de fiction dans le genre du romanquête, comme dans le livre *Qui a tué Daniel Pearl?* (2003), soit compatible avec les règles d'objectivité du journalisme et la rigueur de l'intellectuel?**
- B.H.L.: Oui, quand c'est clair. C'est-à-dire que n'importe quel lecteur honnête du livre sait exactement à quel moment commence le roman, c'est-à-dire

c'est au moment où les faits manquent, où le réel vient à manquer. En gros, les monologues intérieurs. Monologue intérieur de Daniel Pearl au moment de sa décapitation, monologue intérieur d'Omar Cheikh quand il se prépare au rapt. Ce sont les deux moments de roman dans le livre. C'est clair, c'est net, c'est sans ambiguïté. A cette condition-là, cela ne nuit pas à l'objectivité.

- **M.O.: Je vous ai vu dans plusieurs talk-shows américains, de Charlie Rose par exemple. Et vous avez marché sur les traces de De Tocqueville avec le livre *American Vertigo* (2006). D'où vient votre anti-anti-américanisme? Pour vous, est-ce qu'il est important de gagner une reconnaissance internationale?**
- B.H.L.: C'est important, oui, au sens où la partie pour un intellectuel, mais même pour un écrivain ou un philosophe, ne se joue pas en France. Moi la France ne m'intéresse pas tant que ça, ni l'Amérique tant que ça d'ailleurs. Quand on me dit qu'un de mes livres marche en Inde, ça me fait extrêmement plaisir aussi. Donc je ne suis pas provincial. Après, l'anti-anti-américanisme, pourquoi suis-je anti-anti-américain? Parce que je sais de quoi se nourrit l'anti-américanisme. Je sais ce qu'il veut dire. Il veut dire la haine de la démocratie. Voilà, c'est comme ça, historiquement, généalogiquement, et l'Histoire c'est la fatalité. L'Histoire c'est la vérité. L'anti-américanisme veut dire la haine de la démocratie.
- **M.O.: Vous dites également que c'est "quand le pouvoir politique s'étirole que les intellectuels relèvent la tête et prennent le relais" (*Le Siècle de Sartre*, 2000). Vous considérez-vous comme l'un des "principaux hommes politiques du pays", comme disait De Tocqueville des intellectuels (*Livre III de l'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*)?**
- B.H.L.: Non, non, je me considère comme un écrivain, comme un philosophe, qui fait à sa manière de la politique.
- **M.O.: Et quand vous intervenez en Ukraine, sous quel statut agissez-vous?**
- B.H.L.: Le mien. Le statut d'une conscience libre. Légèrement éclairé, doté d'une certaine mémoire, curieux du réel, attentif à ses métamorphoses, et désireux d'en témoigner.
- **M.O.: Vous êtes un Européen de coeur. Comment voyez-vous l'avenir de l'Europe?**
- B.H.L.: Sombre. A cause du Front National, à cause de la montée du populisme dans toute l'Europe, à cause de l'indifférence terrible des Européens face à des drames comme celui de Lampedusa. Sombre.
- **M.O.: Dans *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (1948), Sartre affirme que "Parler, c'est agir". Vous avez également créé le terme du "gexte" dans *Comédie* (1997) qui désigne le travail de l'intellectuel partagé entre les livres et l'action. Vous considérez-vous comme un héritier de Jean-Paul Sartre en ce qui concerne le statut de l'écrivain engagé?**
- B.H.L.: Oui, mais j'aime sans doute plus l'action que Sartre. Sartre l'aimait plus qu'on ne l'a dit, j'ai fait justice dans *Le Siècle de Sartre* de cette idée reçue, Sartre a plus agi qu'on ne le croit. Mais enfin, il n'avait pas le goût du terrain. C'était un phénoménologue, qui avait le goût du réel, et cela ne le conduisait pas à aller au contact des choses autant que moi j'aime le faire. Donc voilà, moi j'aime les reportages, j'aime aller là où l'humanité saigne.
- **M.O.: D'ailleurs, le reportage, c'est votre genre littéraire par excellence?**

- B.H.L.: C'est un grand genre littéraire, je ne dirais pas par excellence. Sartre pensait que c'était son genre littéraire par excellence, c'est pas mon cas. Mais c'est un genre littéraire que j'aime.
- **M.O.: Vous admirez le fait que Sartre ait "réussi à saturer l'espace littéraire et culturel de son temps" (*Le siècle de Sartre*, 2000). Est-ce également votre objectif lorsque vous publiez vos articles sur Internet, en français, en anglais, et en espagnol? Lorsque vous écrivez des livres sur la Bosnie et la Libye et que vous les accompagnez de documentaires? Est-ce votre objectif d'être un "metteur en toutes scènes"(*Le siècle de Sartre*, 2000)?**
- B.H.L.: Je ne dirais pas que c'est mon objectif, mais c'est mon désir, c'est ainsi que je fonctionne. Ce n'est pas un objectif, ce n'est pas un calcul, je ne crois pas. Mais c'est un régime, un mode de fonctionnement. Je fonctionne ainsi, avec cet appétit, avec cette voracité, cette gourmandise du monde, cette volonté d'embrasser la plus grande quantité de monde possible, et de genres littéraires possibles aussi. Mais ce n'est pas un objectif.
- **M.O.: Dans notre société de l'image, pourquoi écrire des livres quand on peut faire des films?**
- B.H.L.: J'ai dit ça. J'ai dit ça un jour après *Le Jour et la nuit*. Si je me souviens du contexte, c'est dans *Comédie*. J'ai dit ça comme une tentation possible, une tentation désastreuse. Je pense même d'ailleurs qu'une part de moi a dû bénir l'échec du *Jour et la nuit* parce qu'il m'a ramené aux livres. Et en effet, j'aurais peut-être eu la tentation de ne faire que des films, mais cela aurait été une erreur.
- **M.O.: J'aimerais également qu'on parle d'Internet. Vous désignez le site créé par Liliane Lazar, Bernard-henri-levy.com, et le site de votre revue laregledujeu.org, comme une "double machine de guerre" (*Internet? Un allié! Réponses aux questions du International Herald Tribune sur l'importance d'Internet*, 2 décembre 2010). Quel impact a eu internet sur votre engagement?**
- B.H.L.: Pas un impact considérable, mais je considère Internet essentiellement comme un lieu d'archivage, un lieu de mémoire. C'est comme cela que Liliane Lazar et ses étudiants le conçoivent en tout cas. Et puis après, quand le torrent de boue est un peu trop violent, il y a des ripostes peut-être parfois qui passent par Internet. Mais enfin, face à la marée noire de la boue, il n'y a pas beaucoup de ripostes possibles hélas.
- **M.O.: Donc ces nouvelles technologies ne vous font pas peur, vous les embrassez?**
- B.H.L.: Elles ne me font pas peur, mais je ne les trouve pas non plus enchanteresses. Elles ne m'aident pas tant que ça, mais elles ne me font pas peur.
- **M.O.: Et que pensez-vous d'autres intellectuels qui préfèrent les revues trimestrielles, comme *Vacarme* ou *Multitudes*?**
- B.H.L.: Je crois qu'on peut marcher sur les deux jambes. Moi j'aime les deux. Ma revue, elle est à l'image de mes goûts, de mes désirs. C'est une revue papier et une revue Internet. Pourquoi choisir?
- **M.O.: Savez-vous combien d'internautes visitent vos sites?**
- B.H.L.: Non.
- **M.O.: ça ne vous intéresse pas?**

- B.H.L.: Si, ça m'intéresse, mais je n'ai pas eu l'occasion de le vérifier. Vous pouvez peut-être, vous, le savoir. Je n'en sais rien.
- **M.O.: Selon vous, quelle est l'importance de la forme dans l'engagement de l'intellectuel aujourd'hui? L'internet est-il un média digne de l'intellectuel?**
- B.H.L.: Oui.
- **Etant donné que le format du bloc-notes sur le site Le Point.fr vous limite à un certain nombre de mots, ainsi que le format des "tweets", votre message ne risque-t-il pas d'être minimisé et simplifié?**
- B.H.L.: Avec les tweets oui, c'est pour ça que je ne tweete pas. Et la longueur du bloc-notes du *Point*, 1100 mots, j'ai le sentiment de pouvoir dire quelque chose en 1100 mots. Ça ne me gêne pas. La chronique est un vrai genre littéraire aussi, le bloc-notes est un genre, ô combien.
- **M.O.: Et Twitter, vous ne l'utilisez pas? Vous avez un compte Twitter...**
- B.H.L.: Oui, c'est le compte de Liliane Lazar, ce n'est pas le mien. Ce sont les gens de Lazar, c'est leur compte informatique. Je crois qu'elle découpe mes articles en petits morceaux.
- **M.O.: Autre question, comment voyez-vous l'avenir de l'écrivain engagé français?**
- B.H.L.: Je voudrais bien en voir d'autres après moi, plus jeunes que moi, et c'est vrai que je n'en vois pas beaucoup. Ça, ça me surprend un peu.
- **M.O.: Vous connaissez la raison?**
- B.H.L.: Non...C'est vous qui la trouverez...
- **M.O.: J'espère. On parle souvent de la mort de l'intellectuel dans les années 80, donc j'essaye de montrer que non.**
- B.H.L.: C'est absurde.
- **M.O.: J'ai une dernière question, au sujet de Monsieur Stéphane Hessel, parce que je fais également une étude de cas sur Monsieur Hessel. J'aimerais savoir pourquoi vous n'avez pas travaillé davantage avec Stéphane Hessel. Est-ce que ce serait parce que vous ne partagiez pas les mêmes vues sur le conflit israélo-palestinien?**
- B.H.L.: Pas seulement. Je pense qu'un intellectuel engagé, ça suppose tout de même un socle théorique un peu solide que Stéphane Hessel n'avait pas, à mon avis. *Indignez-vous* était un petit livre à tous égards, sauf le succès qui a été immense, mais petit livre par la taille, petit livre aussi par l'argumentation. Et puis, pas d'oeuvres derrière. Je ne me sens pas proche de ça, vous voyez. Avec Bourdieu, j'avais des désaccords, par exemple, très violents, enfin là je sais ce qu'il dit parce que je sais dans quoi ça s'enracine. Stéphane Hessel, je ne savais pas d'où venait cet *Indignez-vous*, donc ça ne m'intéressait pas. Après, c'est un phénomène, ça a fait échos, évidemment à des tas de choses, ça je le sais bien, mais moi je n'ai rien à répondre à cela.
- **M.O.: ça ne vous parle pas.**
- B.H.L.: De surcroît, oui, sa participation aux campagnes BDS (Boycott, Désinvestissement et Sanctions contre Israël), l'interview qu'il a donnée pour le *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* que vous connaissez...Qu'est-ce qu'il disait déjà?
- **M.O.: En fait, j'ai surtout lu ce qu'il disait dans *Les Intellectuels intègres* (2013) sur Israël et la Palestine:**
 "[...] lorsqu'on me voit comme quelqu'un qui a un père juif, qui a participé à la création de l'Etat d'Israël – j'étais à New York au moment

où cet Etat a reçu son acte de naissance – on se dit que je devrais avoir pour lui une telle affection que tout ce qui lui arrive devrait m'être cher et que je devrais reconnaître son droit à vouloir s'étendre. Non ce n'est pas le cas. Je considère qu'il se met dans une position inacceptable pour quelqu'un de juridiquement solide et je dis donc à ceux qui me critiquent "vous méconnaissez mon rôle ou mes intentions, je suis loin de vouloir la perte d'Israël, mais je considère que son avenir ne peut pas se confondre avec les politiques que ses dirigeants actuels pratiquent." (Stéphane Hessel, interviewé par Pascal Boniface).

- B.H.L.: Oui, mais il y a autre chose, il y a une interview terrible, je croyais que vous la connaissiez, sur Auschwitz et Israël, etcetera. Il donne une interview terrible à la fin de sa vie.
- **M.O.: Je la regarderai dans ce cas. Je pense qu'on a fait le tour des questions.**

Appendice C

I interviewed Edgar Morin, the philosopher, sociologist and friend of Stéphane Hessel, on 22nd July 2015, at the Institut des Sciences de la Communication, CNRS, Paris.

- M.O.: Vous avez toujours navigué librement de façon transdisciplinaire pendant votre carrière, alors comment définiriez-vous votre carrière, au-delà de votre profession de sociologue?

- E.M.: D'abord, ce n'est pas ma "profession". Il faut vous dire que moi, toute ma formation est polydisciplinaire. Quand j'étais étudiant à l'université, j'ai fait des études d'histoire - qui pour moi est un mode de connaissance très important, de philosophie – à l'époque il y avait la sociologie dans la philosophie, de sciences économiques et de sciences politiques, c'est-à-dire un peu toutes les connaissances concernant l'humain. Et quand je suis entré au CNRS, on m'a mis dans la case, dans la section sociologie. Comme tout le monde adore de plus en plus les étiquettes, on m'a étiqueté "sociologue". Tout ce que j'ai écrit a toujours un aspect sociologique, mais aussi un aspect historique, un aspect philosophique, donc si vous voulez, je ne peux rien contre ceux qui m'étiquettent "sociologue". Ceux qui m'étiquettent "sociologue et philosophe", ça ouvre un peu plus, mais ce n'est pas très adéquat. Anthro-sociologue ou anthropologue, là on confond avec l'anthropologie qui est aujourd'hui réduite aux peuples sans écriture, alors que c'est une science globale de l'homme. Si on dit "philosophe", je ne suis pas du tout un philosophe professionnel, bien que j'aie une partie de ma formation philosophique. Je ne me range pas dans la catégorie des philosophes normaux entre guillemets.

- M.O.: Comme vous savez, je fais une thèse sur les intellectuels engagés et sur leurs modes d'intervention. Donc j'aimerais savoir ce que vous pensez des intellectuels qui utilisent les réseaux sociaux, ou Internet en général, pour faire passer leur message et atteindre un maximum de personnes. Vous avez parlé d'étiquettes tout à l'heure, est-ce que ce sont des intellectuels médiatiques ou est-ce que cela fait partie de leur profession?

- E.M.: Vous savez, l'étiquette "intellectuel médiatique" couvre ceux qui sont très souvent appelés par les médias, télévisions ou radios, ceux qui ont des chroniques permanentes dans la presse, comme Bernard-Henri Lévy ou [Jacques] Attali, c'est-à-dire toute une catégorie de gens qui ont non seulement une présence, mais un pouvoir dans les médias. En ce qui me concerne, je vais dans des débats télévisés, mais je n'ai malheureusement aucun pouvoir, par exemple mes livres sont très peu recensés dans les journaux et périodiques. Alors, moi, je ne me considère pas comme médiatique. Au début de ma carrière, les comptes rendus de mes livres étaient importants pour moi. C'était une époque où il y avait des critiques, des grands critiques qui lisaient les livres. Maintenant, on est dans une époque où il n'y a plus de critiques qui parcourent les bouquins. Vous avez des mafias, vous avez des clans. Les conditions pour moi sont très mauvaises dans les médias actuels, en tout cas dans la presse. En ce qui concerne Internet, je ne peux pas vraiment vous répondre. Moi, la seule chose que je sais, c'est que j'ai un Tweet et par ce Tweet je donne mes réflexions les plus diverses. Des réflexions générales ou des réflexions circonstanciées, par rapport aux événements, comme la Grèce.

- M.O.: Le nombre de caractères – 140 par Tweet, ne vous pose pas de problème? Vous arrivez à exprimer le fond de votre pensée?

- E.M.: Dans certains cas, ça me contraint à condenser, mais c'est pas mal. Ça me contraint à la forme courte des maximes, si vous voulez. Mais comme par ailleurs j'ai fait des oeuvres très longues, comme *La Méthode* qui fait plusieurs centaines de pages, je ne suis pas frustré parce que ce n'est pas mon seul mode d'intervention. Au contraire, j'aime beaucoup cette façon de pouvoir donner une réflexion, une idée dans une forme lapidaire.

- M.O.: Donc la brièveté peut avoir du bon parfois?

- E.M.: Vous savez, d'un côté ma façon de penser nécessite de relier les choses, donc de m'exprimer assez longuement, mais d'un autre côté il y a des formules qui me permettent de concentrer ce que j'ai envie de dire.

- M.O.: Est-ce que vous arrivez à dialoguer avec d'autres philosophes et sociologues actuellement?

- E.M.: Actuellement assez peu. Je dialogue avec Alain Touraine qui est un sociologue. J'avais des compagnons de route qui malheureusement sont morts, comme [Cornelius] Castoriadis, [Claude] Lefort. J'ai toujours fait partie d'une minorité, d'une marginalité intellectuelle. Et dans le fond, mes dialogues se situaient dans cette sphère de gens avec qui j'étais lié.

- M.O.: Quel est le mode d'intervention qui vous semble le plus efficace pour faire passer votre message? Est-ce que ce sont encore les livres?

- E.M.: Il y a message et message. Mon message de fond, qui est un message je dirais épistémologique et sur les problèmes et les difficultés de la connaissance, sur les risques d'erreur et d'illusion, sur tout ça, ça nécessite un travail qui a mis plusieurs dizaines d'années, c'est mon livre sur *La Méthode*. Mais par contre, l'actualité peut m'amener à faire des diagnostics, ce que j'ai fait pendant très longtemps dans le journal *Le Monde*. Il est évident que dans le temps, je pouvais faire des articles qui passaient en trois fois, c'est-à-dire en trois numéros successifs. J'avais le temps et la place de développer ma pensée. Il est évident qu'aujourd'hui la pression est de plus en plus grande, on est contraints à tant de signes, on est très limités. Cela a parfois quelques inconvénients, mais enfin jusqu'à présent je me suis exprimé sur des questions qui ont été aussi bien des questions de guerre comme le Moyen-Orient, la guerre d'Irak, le problème palestinien, etc... ou des questions françaises. Si vous voulez, je peux m'exprimer sur l'évènement, sur ce qui nous arrive, en vertu de tout le travail que j'ai pu faire par ailleurs dans mes livres.

- M.O.: On a parlé de brièveté avec Twitter. Je voudrais qu'on parle aussi du livre de Stéphane Hessel qui s'intitule *Indignez-Vous!* On lui a souvent reproché sa brièveté. Que pensez-vous du fait qu'il soit si court et qu'il n'ait pas été développé?

- E.M.: Vous savez, c'est un discours qu'il a fait lors d'une commémoration à des résistants. Des éditeurs ont demandé d'en faire un petit livre. Et là-dessus, c'est eux

qui ont trouvé ce titre *Indignez-Vous!*, donc si vous voulez, ce n'est pas une volonté consciente de Stéphane Hessel de faire ce livre. C'est une série de circonstances et le livre est arrivé à un moment donné où il a eu un retentissement. Mais après, Hessel a fait un livre qui s'appelle *Engagez-vous!* et puis il a fait d'autres écrits. A mon avis, pour comprendre ce qu'il est, il faut rassembler ses écrits.

- M.O.: Pourriez-vous me raconter comment vous l'avez rencontré?

- E.M.: Ecoutez, je l'ai rencontré une première fois au début des années 80. Il est venu me trouver parce qu'il avait lu quelque chose de moi, je ne sais plus quoi. Il a vu qu'on était en harmonie, en synchronie, alors un premier contact s'est fait. D'autre part, il était très lié à Michel Rocard, que moi de mon côté je connaissais. Ça a été un lien supplémentaire. Et c'est au fil des années que nous nous sommes de plus en plus pas seulement rapprochés mais que nous avons conflué dans des choses en commun. Donc, si vous voulez, il y a une rencontre assez ancienne et une fraternité qui s'est accentuée avec le temps.

- M.O.: Pour vous, est-ce que Stéphane Hessel était un "intellectuel engagé"? Ou bien on lui a collé cette étiquette...

- E.M.: Vous savez, moi même, je n'aime pas beaucoup ce mot d'"engagement", que Sartre a popularisé et qui a une connotation militaire, voire disciplinaire. Il est très utilisé. Mais moi, je considère qu'il [Hessel] est présent dans son siècle. A un moment donné, pour certains comme pour moi, ce qu'on pense, ce qu'on vit et ce qu'on fait sont toujours étroitement liés. Comme on est présents dans la vie du monde, aussi bien les problèmes politiques de la France, de l'Europe, du monde, on est amené à intervenir selon l'exigence de sa conscience. Par exemple, Hessel est intervenu, en tant que Président du Tribunal Russell, sur les questions de la Palestine. Moi-même je suis intervenu parce que c'est un problème qui me semblait d'honneur, de justice, de vérité etc... Quand on pense défendre soit une vérité bafouée, soit combattre une injustice, alors on est qualifié d'engagé. Cela me semble tout à fait naturel. On ne disait pas de Voltaire qu'il était engagé, ni même de Montaigne, bien que Montaigne ait pris une position très nette sur le sort réservé aux indigènes d'Amérique qui était conquise à son époque.

- M.O.: Pour Sartre, l'engagé par excellence, c'était l'écrivain. Et pourtant, Stéphane Hessel n'était pas écrivain.

- E.M.: Oui, mais on dit "intellectuel engagé", on a élargi. Alors, oui, on peut être un avocat, on peut être un essayiste, même un médecin. Enfin, l'écrivain engagé a un lien très fort entre ce qu'il écrit et le sens que ça a pour le monde social ou politique. L'engagement est un thème qui est devenu populaire pour distinguer ceux qui étaient dans la littérature pure, dans leur profession pure, et ceux qui... Mais pour moi "intellectuel engagé" c'est un pléonisme parce que je définis l'intellectuel comme quelqu'un qui, en plus de ce qu'il fait comme écrivain, comme poète etc..., prend position sur un problème commun à tous. Ce problème peut être philosophique ou peut être politique. Par exemple, Emile Zola est un romancier qui devient intellectuel quand il prend position dans l'Affaire Dreyfus. Camus est un écrivain qui devient intellectuel quand il écrit *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, c'est-à-dire qu'il pose le problème de l'absurdité de la vie, ou aussi bien quand il fait de la résistance

ou quand il écrit ses articles dans *Combat*. Donc, pour moi, être intellectuel, ça implique ce que vous appelez l'engagement, parce que sinon on est simplement un écrivain, un poète, un avocat, etc...

- M.O.: Vous qui avez côtoyé Hessel et Sartre, est-ce que vous voyez des points communs entre les deux, ou des différences flagrantes?

- E.M.: Ils sont tout à fait différents parce que Stéphane Hessel est un homme qui entre dans la Résistance active sous l'Occupation, alors que Sartre continue à faire son oeuvre d'écrivain avant tout engagement. Et ce n'est qu'après la Libération que Sartre progressivement s'engage, comme il dit, à côté des Communistes et défend l'Union Soviétique, et puis après, la Chine maoïste. Hessel n'a jamais été communiste ou pro-communiste. Il n'a jamais été maoïste. Hessel, après sa carrière de Résistant, est un homme qui a eu des fonctions politiques, enfin, diplomatiques à l'ONU. C'est un homme très cultivé chez qui la poésie a joué un rôle important, qui a réfléchi et écrit sur sa vie. Ils sont aux antipodes l'un de l'autre.

- M.O.: Et pourtant, on essaye souvent de les rapprocher. J'ai interviewé ses éditeurs, Sylvie Crossman et Jean-Pierre Barou, et j'ai pu constater qu'ils essayaient de rapprocher Hessel de Sartre. Ils ont même encouragé Hessel à mentionner Sartre dans *Indignez-Vous!*

- E.M.: Même dans les prises de position fondamentales de Hessel par rapport au Moyen-Orient, par rapport à la Palestine, la différence est totale.

- M.O.: Oui, Hessel s'est beaucoup engagé sur le sujet de la Palestine et on lui reprochait parfois la sélectivité de son engagement. D'un autre côté, on a aussi des intellectuels qui s'engagent partout. Pour vous, est-ce qu'il y a un juste milieu entre cette sélectivité et le fait d'être sur tous les tableaux en même temps?

- E.M.: Vous savez, il y a un peu trop sans doute de pétitions multiples et qui se dévaluent les unes les autres. Mais le problème, c'est que les événements nous sollicitent. Quand vous avez les deux Guerres d'Irak, quand vous avez la Guerre de Yougoslavie, quand vous avez actuellement les événements du Moyen-Orient avec la Syrie, je fais partie de ceux qui se sentent concernés. Même si je n'ai pas écrit sur la Grèce, je me sens concerné. C'est le monde qui nous interpelle, qui nous harcèle, moi j'aimerais être tranquille dans mon coin mais j'y arrive pas...

- M.O.: Et je voudrais qu'on parle aussi de poésie parce que j'ai lu que vous partagiez cet intérêt avec Stéphane Hessel. Pour lui, c'est un "art de la brièveté" et quelque chose qui façonnait à la fois son esprit et son corps. C'était comme une philosophie de vie. Partagez-vous la même vision de la poésie?

- E.M.: Il y a deux sens du mot "poésie". Il y a d'abord les mots, les poèmes, et lui-même beaucoup de poèmes étaient très présents dans son esprit. Et même, il avait besoin après chaque repas de réciter un poème qu'il aimait. Il y a la présence des poètes et des poèmes dans son esprit, si vous voulez, donc dans sa vie. Moi, je n'ai pas la même mémoire que lui mais aussi il y a beaucoup de textes poétiques

qui me reviennent souvent en mémoire. Je suis très heureux, si vous voulez, d'avoir appartenu à cette génération où on faisait apprendre par *cœur* les poésies aux élèves. C'est grâce à ça que les passages du *Cid*, les poèmes de Musset, de Lamartine sont présents en moi. Bien entendu, il y a ceux que j'ai appris de moi-même, que j'ai découverts. Alors ça, c'est une chose. D'autre part, il y a ce que j'appelle un sentiment poétique de la vie, chose que André Breton et les surréalistes ont mis en relief. Moi, je trouve que Hessel avait un sentiment poétique de la vie. Il avait un émerveillement devant les beautés de la vie. D'ailleurs, cette capacité d'aimer la vie ou de s'émerveiller lui donnait l'énergie de se révolter. Il avait ces deux choses à la fois, donc si vous voulez, moi je ressens comme lui, disons, le besoin aussi de vivre poétiquement. Vivre, ce n'est pas seulement avoir une vie avec des activités que l'on peut quantifier et mesurer. Vivre, c'est communier, pas seulement avec autrui, avec la nature, tout ça...Donc, je pense que nous avons ce côté commun.

- M.O.: J'ai lu qu'il avait écrit des poèmes lui-même mais je n'en ai pas trouvé la trace.

- E.M.: Je le savais, mais je ne les connais pas. Moi-même j'ai écrit des poèmes dans ma jeunesse mais qui ne sont pas publiés.

- M.O.: Dans *Le Monde* en 2010 vous avez écrit un article intitulé *Eloge de la Métamorphose* (*Le Monde* | 09.01.2010) où vous dites: "Les jeunes générations se désolent qu'il n'y ait plus de cause comme celle de notre résistance durant la seconde guerre mondiale. [...] Aujourd'hui, la cause est sans équivoque, sublime : il s'agit de sauver l'humanité. » Ceci était très similaire à ce qu'il a dit plus tard dans *Indignez-vous !*, donc pensez-vous l'avoir influencé dans ses écrits?

- E.M.: Dans *Indignez-vous!*, non. Après, c'est surtout mon livre *La Voie*. Alors qu'*Indignez-vous!*, c'était ce mouvement de révolte, il était content de voir l'expression dans mon livre *La Voie* d'une voie à suivre, c'est-à-dire quelque chose qui n'était pas seulement un "non", mais qui était un "oui" impliqué dans ce "non". Et je crois que c'est là-dessus que je l'ai un peu influencé. D'ailleurs, on a fait un livre en commun qui s'appelle *Le Chemin de l'Espérance* et on a épousé les mêmes idées.

- M.O.: Vous dites qu'il faut qu'il se constitue une conscience de « Terre-patrie ». Or, aujourd'hui, partout en Europe, on assiste à la montée des nationalismes. David Cameron en appelle à un référendum au Royaume-Uni pour une éventuelle sortie du pays de l'Union Européenne. La Grèce est quant à elle en grande difficulté. Bref, comment parvenir à une conscience de « Terre-patrie » quand il n'y a déjà pas de conscience européenne ? Comment voyez-vous l'avenir de l'Europe ?

- E.M. : Il y a deux choses. Il y a l'Europe et la planète. Je pense que même si on est fortement Européen, on ne peut pas ne pas se sentir aujourd'hui lié à une communauté de destin terrestre. Moi, je fonde mon idée sur le fait que, avec la mondialisation, il y a une communauté de destin. Pourquoi ? Parce que l'humanité, où qu'elle soit, a les mêmes périls et les mêmes problèmes. Les périls sont évidents : c'est la multiplication de l'arme nucléaire, c'est la dégradation de la biosphère, c'est

une économie totalement incontrôlée et qui est animée uniquement par la recherche du profit. C'est la croissance des fanatismes de toute sorte. C'est l'hégémonie du capital financier sur le monde. On voit que ce sont des problèmes pour toute l'humanité, aussi bien des risques qu'apportent ces développements que des chances que pourrait apporter cette conscience commune, à partir desquels pourrait se développer un patriotisme terrestre, qui engloberait les différents patriotismes, qui engloberait l'Europe, qui ne les dissoudrait pas. Mais, il ne suffit pas d'avoir les conditions favorables, il y a les difficultés de la prise de conscience. Aujourd'hui, si vous voulez, ce qui domine, c'est beaucoup plus un recroquevillement sur l'ethnie, sur la nation, qu'une prise de conscience qu'on participe à un destin commun. Il y a beaucoup d'obstacles. La crise actuelle ne nous donne pas les moyens de comprendre que c'est une crise vécue par toute l'humanité, mais malheureusement le moyen de fuir ces problèmes-là en pensant qu'il y a des coupables, soit les étrangers, les Roms, les arabes, les juifs... Donc, si vous voulez, il y a les conditions mais la prise de conscience n'est pas réalisée. Mais ça, ça arrive très souvent dans l'Histoire humaine que les consciences mettent du temps à venir.

- M.O. : Vous restez optimiste sur cette prise de conscience ?

- E.M. : Vous savez, optimiste... Je pense que c'est possible : je suis possibiliste.

- M.O. : Vous-même, vous sentez-vous encore Européen ? J'ai lu que vous étiez déçu par l'Europe.

- E.M. : Oui, j'avoue que aussi bien l'attitude de l'Union Européenne à l'égard des migrants, ce refus, ce sentiment de forteresse assiégée comme s'il y avait une invasion barbare, et d'autre part l'attitude à l'égard de la Grèce m'ont énormément déçu. Et je suis devenu très pessimiste sur l'Europe, c'est-à-dire ce n'est pas seulement qu'elle risque de se décomposer, mais qu'elle risque de se fossiliser uniquement sur un plan d'une économie néo-libérale, et que sans doute que tout ceci va créer des conflits ultérieurs, notamment peut-être une scission entre le Sud de l'Europe et le Nord. Donc l'Europe est en crise. Alors, un des moyens peut-être de lutter contre la crise, c'est ce qu'a proposé le Président français, qu'un certain nombre de pays européens fassent une avant-garde et commencent à constituer une union politique, mais c'est bien difficile parce qu'on voit que même les pays qui ont été très proches comme la France et l'Allemagne, ont un regard politique aujourd'hui très différent sur beaucoup de questions fondamentales. Ne parlons pas des Polonais, des Bulgares, des Litvaniens, etc...

- M.O. : Vous aviez même évoqué, non pas un gouvernement, mais une gouvernance mondiale.

- E.M. : Oui, à mon avis, cela deviendra tôt ou tard vital pour éviter une décomposition, une régression généralisée, mais là encore, on est dans l'incertain.

